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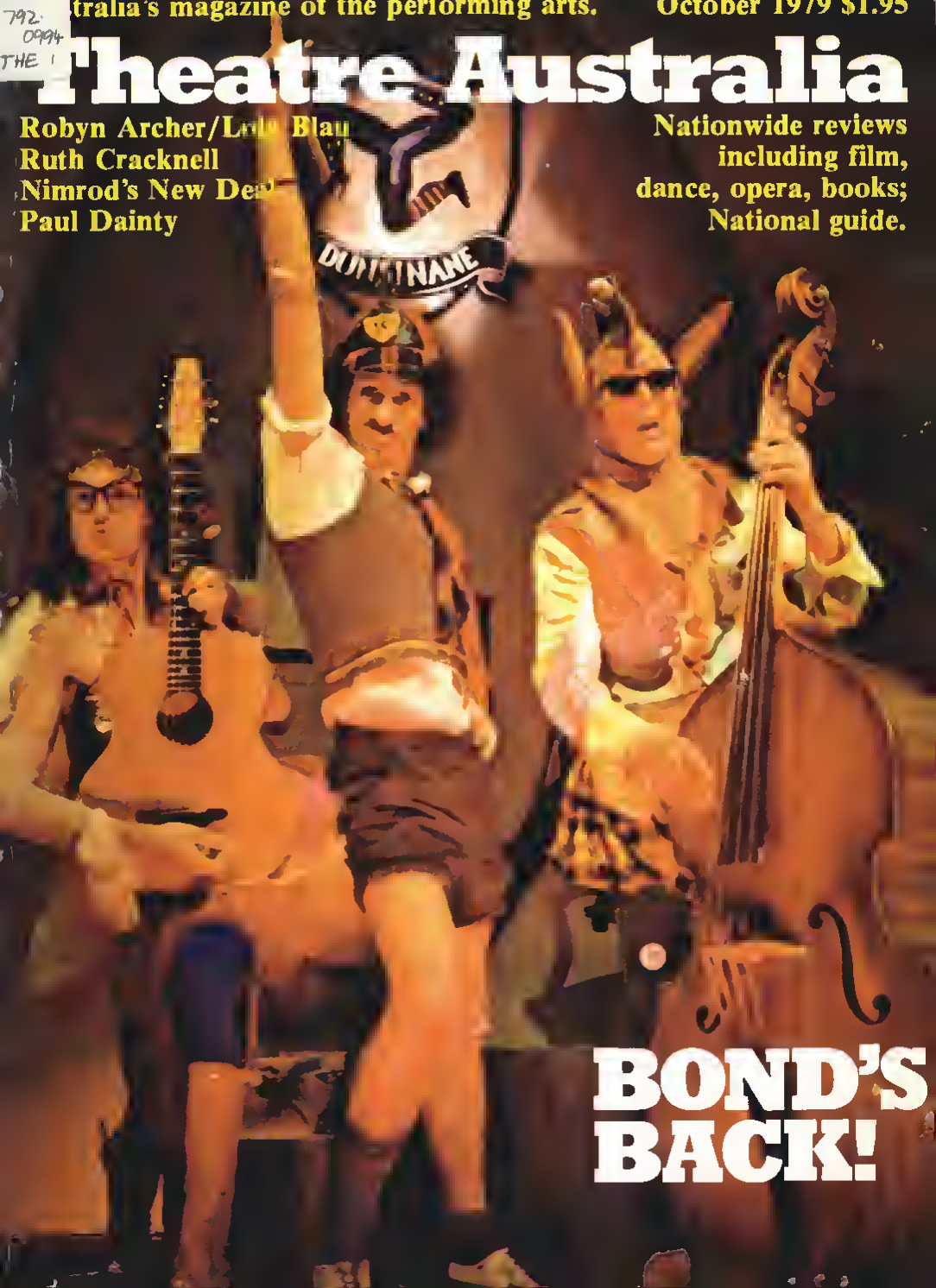
Theatre Australia

Robyn Archer/Lola Blau
Ruth Cracknell
Nimrod's New Deal
Paul Dainty

Nationwide reviews including film, dance, opera, books; National guide.



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Theatre Australia

OCTOBER 1979, VOLUME 4, NO. 3

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COMMENT

Welcome to the new better looking *Theatre Australia*

We're pleased to say that from this month on we're expanding to sixty pages we have a new, improved design that aims for easier reading and more visual material

The magazine should also, from now on, be more available in newsagents we know people sometimes had trouble getting copies in the past and if this is still the case we'd appreciate it if you dropped us a line to let us know

Of course the most convenient way to get your regular copy of TA every month is to take out a subscription and it's even more worthwhile now the Currency "Theatre Australia New Writing" series of playscripts has started going out free to subscribers We hope subscribers are impressed with their first play this month, *A Manual of Trench Warfare*, the next two of the quarterly series will be *Departmental* and *Lamb of God*

Now in its fourth year, it seems that *T4* is entering a new phase and at a recent Australian Drama Conference in Canberra, there was a general consensus of opinion that Australian theatre itself is moving into a new phase Certainly there have been a good many upheavals over the past year, especially, perhaps, in Sydney since the demise of the Old Tote No doubt new ground will be broken down when Richard Wherrett gets the autonomous Sydney Theatre Company on the road in 1980 and Nimrod will show parallel developments with the contribution of its two new artistic directors, Neil Armfield and Kim Carpenter Katherine Brishane talks to them in a Spotlight article, further on.

Glancing through our new Info column (taking the place of Quotes and Queries any items of interest will be welcome at the editorial office), it's clear that a lot of theatres will be coming under new direction in 1980 in Newcastle, Perth and Brisbane Added to that Colin George will be leaving the State Theatre Company in Adelaide in a matter of months and Roger Pulvers will be taking up a post at Melbourne's Hoopla One of the few places that remains not only stable, but expanding is the MTC who now have their new Athenaeum 2 studio space in operation

At the Australian Drama Conference were a good many members, past and present, of the Australian Performing Group including Jack Hibberd, John Romeril and Sue Ingleton Since its advent some eleven years ago the group and its ideals have become increasingly diffuse, to the extent that the theatre they have been producing over the last two years has been attracting a diminishing audience To combat this process the Pram Factory will also be taking a very different path in 1980, an "ensemble" of ten dedicated and suitable people is at this moment being picked and it is they who will forge a new line of work while the ever increasing number of hangers on and fringe groups will be stripped away, or given limited grants to work separately Hopefully this step which must be to a certain extent in the dark will answer the question that was strongly raised at the Canberra Conference hasn't the APG fulfilled its function in Australian theatre shouldn't it disband?

The upheavals are not of course limited to subsidised theatre The word is now that Kenn Brodziak has set a date for his retirement from J C Williamson's March 1980 after he has bumped *Annie* into Adelaide under his name His successor is yet to be nominated but commercial theatre will certainly feel a change after the very personal imprint Mr Brodziak has stamped on it during his reign as undisputed king In this issue Ruth Cracknell talks about the future of the Australian actor in commercial theatre and the consequent responsibility resting on Ron Haddrick and herself in *The Gin Game*

The Elizabethan Theatre Trust is taking steps to see that Australian theatre starts taking a place in the international context (see Info) and we will be covering that in more depth as the project progresses The Australian Drama Conference kept coming back to the idea that much theatre of the future must be small and community orientated, *T4* will be looking further at groups who are working in different ways at this As Ruth Cracknell says, the time is ripe

Theatre Australia

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INFORMATION

LILLIAN GISH The legendary Lillian Gish toured Australia and New Zealand during September, with her programme *Lillian Gish and the Movies*, which tells the story of how film became an art form, in her own words and with film excerpts On the screen are seen her friends the luminaries of those early Hollywood days Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. Miss Gish, now in her eighties, has received rave reviews from critics for her one-woman "concert"

She made her first film in 1912 - *An Unseen Enemy* for D W Griffith - and her latest - Robert Altman's *A Wedding* - has been on this year In an extraordinary career on stage, in film, on television and writing in which *everything* stands out, it's fascinating to note that in 1973, Lillian Gish played in Mike Nichol's production of *Uncle Vanya* with George C Scott, Julie Christie and Nicol Williamson, was Ophelia to Gielgud's Hamlet in '36, and made the film of Graham Greene's *The Comedians* in 1967 with Taylor and Burton, Alec Guiness and Peter Ustinov

Photograph Hoover Art Studio

MOBILE LIMBS Limbs is a small New Zealand modern dance company, which, having had quite some success in their own country, has come to tour Australia - Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide - for a month from 19 October The company has 6 dancers and co-artistic directors Chris Jannides and Mary-Jane O'Reilly choreograph most of the dances, though their repertoire includes classical, jazz and modern styles They also use a wide variety of backing, for instance, they move to the music of Bach Miles Davis, and Brian Eno, or sometimes to poetry, sounds or simply silence Limbs starts off at the Cell Block Theatre at East Sydney Tech

MARATHON After the success of *Twenties And All That Jazz* John Deidrich has turned his hand to another period musical, this time a look at what happened in Australia and abroad during the decade of the 1930's It's name - *Oh Those Thirties*

Playing at the Checkmate Theatre Restaurant in Geelong, there are many of the *Twenties* team to thank for putting *Thirties* together The format too is similar, with two men and one woman, the cast, Diedrich with Kerryn Henderson and Neil Melville, they were choreographed by Jillian Fitzgerald and the sets designed by Trina Parker

CARROLL SUPPORTS WHERRETT The general press reaction to Richard Wherrett's appointment as Artistic Director of the Sydney Theatre Company has been favourable, but what of the sentiments within the theatre profession? Peter Carroll's response is probably typical of most actors, now one of the country's top actors he was originally given his chance by directors like Richard.

"Richard will promote young talent, he gives people chances and takes risks. The main feeling amongst the theatrical community is one of relief. It's the relief that someone will be in that position who will be both sensitive to actors' needs and who is committed to theatrical excitement and plays that are relevant to us living in Sydney."

Carroll's definitive performance in Ron Blair's *The Christian Brother* has toured the country, New Zealand and will soon be seen in London. He feels that a certain amount of internationalism should be sought, 'a good thing about Richard is that he has a very cosmopolitan outlook, he won't be parochially Australian. But he will be internationally Australian, and that's a good thing."

And in relation to the other Sydney theatre company, Nimrod, the fact that Richard Wherrett will maintain his position as a director on the Board at Nimrod he feels is important and should mean the two companies will be able to maintain distinct identities while agreeing on "who will be better entitled to do what play given the resources available."

AUNTIE'S BIG PLAYS One wonders why the ABC production of *Big Toys* could not have been re-scheduled for Kate Fitzpatrick to play the part that was written for her, if she was unable to fit in with their timetable. As it is the play is given a quite different slant in the respective ages of the Bnsanquet's, with Diane Cilento playing Mag to John Gaden's Reggie. Max Cullen, recast in his stage role, is the meat in the sandwich.

The rest of Auntie's Aus drama series includes Buzo's *Coralie Lansdowne Says No*, Robyn Nevin as Nellie in Hibberd's *A Toast To Melba*, Williamson's *The Department*, Mery Rutherford's *Departmental* (the second *TA* New Writers script going free to subscribers) and Barry Oakley's *Bedfellows*. This series to be screened sometime next year, will be followed at some stage, by a series of plays specially commissioned for television.

Photograph Robert McFarlane

THEATRE EXCHANGE The Australian World Theatre Exchange, funded by the Australia Council, has become an Elizabethan Theatre Trust project, spearheaded at the moment by entrepreneur Wilton Morley. The basic idea is to arrange exchange productions from Britain, Europe and America with Australia.

John Little of the Trust explained that their job would be "to find appropriate companies from overseas to perform in appropriate venues here, then the host company would go back and play their venue. This may involve companies like the National and Royal Shakespeare Company, but we'll also be approaching smaller and more varied companies, and hopefully arranging tours for, for instance, Nimrod or the Sydney Theatre Company, the MTC, APG and whenever we can. In fact we've been working on this for some time, and with the Acting Company from the USA, who will be coming

out here next February, we have permission for an Australian Company to at some stage play their circuit. Ideally we would like all Australian companies with an all Australian product."

There's basic approval for the scheme among all the unions over here, and Wilton Morley will be negotiating with their overseas counterparts, as well as putting out feelers with companies, on his 4 week investigative trip. More will be known when he gets back in mid October.

Could this mean Nimrod Shakespeare at the RSC?

INFORMATION

MEETING THE PEOPLE If the people cannot come to the arts then the Western Australian Arts Council plans to bring the arts to the people with the launching of an ambitious artists in residence programme throughout the State next year

The Arts Council is seeking artists craftsmen, drama directors and musicians to take up a five-month residency programme in three isolated areas, the Gascoyne region based in Carnarvon, 904 kilometres from Perth, the Great Southern based in Albany (409 kilometres) and the Goldfields based in Kalgoorlie (597 kilometres).

Next year's programme follows the first and highly successful artists in residence programme in the Pilbara last year when two artists, George Haynes and Nigel Hewitt and their families, spent six months in the area, says Timothy Mason, director of the Western Australian Arts Council "The repsonse from Pilbara residents was so great that we decided to extend the programme to cover three regions and to offer specific skills in each area We want individuals or families who can work together, become part of the local communities and help develop the growing awareness of the arts and crafts."

The Arts Council is seeking a multi-skilled crafts team in spinning, weaving, leatherwork tanning and pottery for the Gascoyne a drama director and music or crafts team for the Great Southern and a musical and artist-crafts team for the Goldfields

Applications close on October 31 Further information is available from the Director, Western Australian Arts Council

MUSIC MUSIC MUSIC The visits of renowned musicians to Australia will make the month of October an exciting one for music lovers

One of the world's truly great Divas, the Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballe, will make her Australian debut at the Sydney Opera House on 8 October, and then goes straight on to the Adelaide Festival Centre and Melbourne's Dallas Brookes Hall Madame Caballe will be singing arias and songs from Vivaldi, Handel, Schubert, Schuman, Verdi, Massenet and Strauss. Following this she goes to Tokyo to join the Covent Garden Tour as Tosca

Sydney Town Hall is the venue for the single Australian recital of Renata Scotto - Prima Donna Assoluta of New York's Metropolitan Opera John Winther will be accompanying the recital (14 October) and then Miss Scotto will give three performances at the Regent with the Australian Opera in the title role of *Madame Butterfly*. To mark the occasion the Regent is extending its orchestra pit

And last but not least, Yehudi and Hebzibah Menuhin will be back in Australia to give two concerts each at Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide The first concert will be a programme of Mozart and Bach, while the second will see the Menuhins performing two of Beethoven's great sonatas, No 5 *The Spring* and the *Kreutzer*, No 9

MORE MUSICAL CHAIRS Newcastle' Hunter Valley Theatre Company has appointed its third artistic director. The man to follow Terry Clarke and Ross' McGregor is Aarne Neeme, recently free-lancing after his years as Artistic Director at the National Perth He takes up his appointment in January In the directorial game of musical chairs, with its ever increasing number of people to available chairs, it seems that changes are due in Perth Colin McColl, presently artistic director of the Hole in the Wall is not having his contract renewed for the next year. There is some speculation as to

whether Terry Clarke, who worked with Neeme at the Neeme at the National before going to the HVTC will be the man for the job photo

DEBORAH AND DEBBIE Two 50's starlets will be in Australia together, with Deborah Kerr still touring in *The Day After The Fair* in November when Debbie Reynolds appears on the scene to play her variety *Debbie Reynolds Show*. After a long and successful Las Vegas season, the AETT is bringing her to Australia where she'll perform with a 24-piece orchestra and nine member dance company Some of the highlights of the show are the costume changes, where Debbie goes from "country bumpkin" to "sequined songstress" under

Blossom Dearie

the spotlights, and her impersonations of such stars as Dietrich, Channing and Streisand.

Sounds like the female version of Danny La Rue — couldn't be more different to the other Deborah!

Also making brief concert tours in Oct Nov are Blossom Dearie and Sammy Davis Jr.

Derek Jacobi as Hamlet with Michael Howarth.

HAMLET ON TWICE The Elizabethan Theatre Trust celebrated its 25th year on September 29th and to commemorate it, is bringing out a silver jubilee *Hamlet*. The Old Vic production was performed for the Queen on her silver jubilee, and will be touring Australian in November and December, after performances at Elsinore, in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Japan. It then moves on to China, where the company will be the first English speaking drama company to perform there since the revolution.

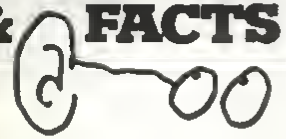
Derek Jacobi will be back to take the title role (apparently he, like many others, is not at all happy with the BBC Shakespeare series, in which he also plays the Dane) with Jane Wymark as his Ophelia. Director is Toby Robertson, who rejected the possibility of taking on the Sydney Theatre Company because of the limitations of the Drama Theatre. In Sydney they will be playing at Her Majesty's.

A rather more closet *Hamlet* is the MTC's, which will be playing in their new studio space - Athenaeum 2. The new space will certainly challenge the production, and its lead actor John Walton, who finds the prospect "terrifying but exciting". Similarly, as a newcomer to the role he finds the critical interpretations somewhat daunting. "If you tried to play him their way you'd end up with a syphilitic schizophrenic with an Oedipus complex and that's just a character draft - now try playing it."

CHANGE AT LA BOITE This month Brisbane's La Boite Theatre sees a change of Artistic Director. Rick Billinghurst, who has been at the helm of the company for three and a half years, is off on an overseas study tour taking in Europe, the UK and America before returning to free-lance in Australia. Rick has not only been a dynamic force behind La Boite's main house theatre, and helped to make it one of the most successful pro am theatres in the country, but has also been largely responsible for the success and development of La Boite's Early Childhood Drama Project (see the article further on in this issue). Taking his place is Malcolm Blaylock, who has worked extensively as a director with both professional and amateur companies in South Australia. More on Rick Billinghurst and La Boite in November.

NEW OPERA IN PERTH Opera Viva Inc in Perth has been going since November 1976 and has already fully produced 8 operas, engaged in country touring and formed its own orchestra, all without any Government assistance. Its secretary, Ken Roach says "It has relied entirely on its, now substantial, subscribing

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



By Ray Stanley

Will these revivals of musicals never end? *The King And I* (with **Yul Brynner** now in London) *Hello Dolly!* (with **Carol Channing** at Drury Lane), *My Fair Lady* (with **Rex Harrison** in Los Angeles), *Oklahoma!* scheduled for England *West Side Story* on the boards, and *Most Happy Fella* to replace *I Remember Mama*. **Angela Lansbury** I believe turned down an offer to repeat her role in *Mame*. And now whispers that the club edition of *My Fair Lady* with **Stuart Wagstaff** as Higgins may do a Melbourne theatre season. Wonder if this would be wise remembering the disastrous run the 1970 revival there had.

Looks like the proverbial success story for **Mariette Rups** who came to everyone's attention as the "tits and ass" girl in *A Chorus Line*. She was in **Wal Cherry**'s *The Emigrants*, The Last Laugh's *Tricks* (later seen at the Adelaide Festival Centre) and is now replaying **Nancye Hayes** in *Annie* before going into *Evita*. Incidentally Nancye is the first adult to leave the cast of *Annie*. **John** (*Are You Being Served*) **Inman** is likely to star in a revue in Australia. And could we be seeing **Diane Cilento** in *Filumena*?

John Derum seems set to do a one-man show of his own upon C.J. Dennis. John, who has researched and scripted it himself, tells me he prefers to call it "a solo presentation". Believe the South Australian Theatre Company is so pleased with **June Bronhill**'s work in *Oh What A Lovely War*, *Mate*, it has plans for casting her in a straight role. It's likely **John Houseman**'s Actors' Company will be doing a new version of *The White Devil* as well as *Broadway* when it tours here early next year.

Meeting **Deborah Kerr**, recalled the fact I once saw her play Ellie Dunn in *Heartbreak House* on the London stage. Had her career not taken the turn it did, she probably would now be one of the leading classical actresses of the English theatre. More or less agreeing, Miss Kerr told me she never really had any great desire to play the classics, in fact she *had* received offers from the National, but it would have meant her being tied down to a two-year contract. Rosalind though is a role she wishes she had played. **Derek Nimmo** will definitely be back in Sydney and Melbourne next March in a new English comedy. Derek is every promoter's dream of what a star will do on and off the stage.

Remember **Ken Shorter**? He's playing a drag queen in the play *Bent* in London. Wonder if he will be brought back to appear in MTC's production. **John Hargreaves** is looking forward to getting back to the discipline of the stage next December when he goes into the first play of the Sydney Theatre Company, the 1883 melodrama *The Sunny South* by George Darrell, to be directed by **Richard Wherrett**. And it could be he and **Wendy Hughes** will appear in something together, perhaps a Tennessee Williams vehicle. Nice to see **Michael Tyzack** in the orchestra pit for *The Two Ronnies*. Michael of course was musical director for both *Gershwin* and *The 20s And All That Jazz*.

Now playing in London with **Richard Briers** in the lead is a comedy by New wrote *Flesh*, *Middle-Aged Spread*, a film version of which has been doing very nicely at the box office in New Zealand. Most enthusiastic about the Canadian theatre scene after three months playing there in **John Romeril**'s *The Floating World* is **Bruce Spence**. The play had a great reception there and from what Bruce told me it is obvious Australia can learn much from the way things are done in Canada. Why has no one staged *Wentworthville* in Melbourne?

After his success in *My Brilliant Career*, surely some of the subsidised companies will be clamouring for the services of **Sam Neill**. And according to what he told me recently, Sam would welcome a stint back on stage. The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust has acquired Australian rights to the smash hit Broadway play *The Elephant Man* and we can expect a production next year.

Recently discovered, appearing in *Trapeeze Tabaos* at Melbourne's Flying Trapeeze, a young man who I firmly believe has the talent to become a major star. **Nicholas Flanagan**, who sits at a piano and sings his own songs as well as participating in sketches, seems to me a mixture of **Lewis Fiander** and **Tom Lehrer**: he has a big voice, a certain sophisticated aggressiveness about him, and a lot of originality.

Incidentally, **Ralph Kerle**, who now owns the Flying Trapeze, believes the cabaret type entertainment provided by his cafe The Last Laugh and suchlike is now spreading to Sydney and there could be an exchange of talent between the two capitals. As a start he has been presenting Cabaret Conspiracy from Sydney in midnight shows four nights a week. On his recent trip to London Hoopla's **Carrillo Gantner** saw a great many shows and apparently his favourites were *The Family Reunion* with Edward Fox, *Evita*, *As You Like It* and *Pal Joey*. He's hoping to stage the latter at the Playhouse.

Wendy Blacklock, paying one of her rare visits to Melbourne, was pleased to be getting away from her '96 Mummy' image in *George and Mildred*. Wendy, who was with **Margaret Rutherford** in *The Happiest Days Of Your Life* and has done much revue work, hopes to appear on stage more in the future. And talking of *George and Mildred*, **Brian Murphy**, who has played both Romeo and Hamlet, told me that on return to England he will be playing *Cyrano de Bergerac* and Moliere's *Don Juan*. As for **Yootha Joyce** (Mildred), she said she wants sometime to play Gertrude in *Hamlet*.

At the opening night of Pinter's *No Man's Land* for Hoopla the Victorian Arts Centre's Chief Executive Officer **George Fairfax** remarked that seeing such a play gave him itchy feet to get back to the stage. George who used to be considered one of Melbourne's best actors and directors, last appeared on stage 10 years ago as Pastor Manders. After the undoubted success of *The John Sullivan Story*, the telemovie sparked off by *The Sullivans* series, wouldn't it be a good idea if Crawford Productions made a telemovie or even a feature film on *Young Ramsay*?

It will probably be a long time before we see a show out here take over two million dollars as did *The Two Ronnies*. Understand it played to 95% capacity in Sydney and 99% capacity in Melbourne. **Ronnie Corbett** incidentally is going to tour New Zealand with the one-man concert he did a few years back here.

Ever thought about those ads in newspapers and what they *really* mean? Here are some definitions: "Fast-moving"- it contains one car chase. "Breath-taking action" a car chase plus an airplane chase. "Ten years in the making" probably means nine years in litigation. "A story you'll always remember" it's probably been made five times already. "A different kind of motion picture" the only one this year without **Burt Reynolds**, **Bryan Brown** or **Donald Sutherland**. "A film the whole family can enjoy" it contains plenty of violence. "It will keep you on the edge of your seat" you are getting ready to leave. "A different kind of love story" it is about a man and a woman. "An impressive directorial debut by a major new talent" they couldn't afford an established director.

That's all folks, that's all.

DO WE NEED A R T S?
Dr Pascoe replies

Dear Sir,

Your August edition carried a *Theatre Australia Enquiry* under the title "Do We Need A R T S!" Our evidence over the last two years suggests that a wide range of artists and arts organisations seem to think so. Craft groups, film makers, authors, musicians, theatre companies, painters, galleries and government arts authorities have sought us out for consulting, management training, advice on fund-raising and so on. They seem to say we understand art and the things of the spirit but you understand administration and balance sheets and you force us to think through our problems logically. Perhaps *Theatre Australia* should have recognised this and asked us to do the Enquiry on A R T S Ltd.

Let me illustrate six things that we would have tried to avoid.

1 **Misreading the financial facts:** The article is based on a supposed difference of $14,100 between the donations A R T S Ltd receives and our "cost of services donated to the arts and administration." However, if a simple misreading of our financial statements is corrected the difference reduces to $2,207. If account is taken of the $4,512 of donations that we carried forward to the next year, a surplus results of $2,305.

2 **Drawing conclusions that contradict reported evidence.** There are several examples of this but let one suffice. The article quotes us as saying "We do not raise money on behalf of artists or art groups. We want them to learn how to do it and we want them to establish their own on-going relationships with donors." However, to the next paragraph it asks and then further assumes that A R T S is "creating the constant business problem of the middleman."

3 **Using selective or hearsay evidence where comprehensive or hard evidence is available.** One person is quoted as criticizing an A R T S Ltd management course because it was too long. Those questionnaire responses at the end of the course indicated that over seventy percent of participants recommended the same duration for next year and those who differed were not less than [illegible] variation.

A seminar we ran for editors and publishers of arts magazines is criticized as follows: "the eight-hour seminar was delayed for a couple of hours while final figures were completed." That is demonstrably untrue. Further, in drawing attention to the lack of follow through from the seminar, the Enquiry ignores the fact that *Theatre Australia*'s own financial plight had lead to the convening of the seminar and that its own editor was one of the five people asked by those present to initiate the follow on programmes. A R T S Ltd had no implementation responsibility.

4 **Casting doubt without seeking any evidence.** A R T S Ltd, the article says, "claims advice to eighty unspecified individuals and groups, with several unacknowledged quotations in praise of the company." The list of individuals and organizations advised and the accompanying discussion notes are all on file in our office, as are the letters. As a matter of interest, about a quarter of the organizations advised are theatre companies or related organizations, including *Theatre Australia* on 16 August 1977 and 24 April 1978.

The article queries a report we did for the Victorian Ministry for the Arts that "came up with a series of questions about the arts in country Victoria." Tasks. "Is the value of such a report questionable?" There is no attempt to confirm that we did what the Ministry wanted.

5 **Displaying naivete of the real world:** It suggests that the private sector hand-out recieve money "earmarked for the arts" to believe in the tooth of Father Christmas rather than, for instance, at Oliver Twist.

Is the Sunday Australian Business in the Arts Awards really a "[illegible] donations from the business world to [illegible] scheme which congratulates them for making donations"? Doesn't the film industry fund film awards? Don't members of the fashion industry sponsor fashion awards. I find it logical rather than paradoxical that a number of businessmen who believe in supporting the arts should create awards to encourage others to do the same and decent that the sponsors exclude themselves as award recipients.

6 **Getting names, identities and quotations wrong.** The director of our major management course was Barbour not Barnes. The Governors of the Adelaide Festival are different from the Trustees of the Adelaide Festival Centre Trust and the Festival is a private company not a government body. April Hersey is the editor of *Craft Australia* not *Craft Magazine* and Sam Smith surely deserves the full Sam Ure-Smith, and so on.

7 **Writing a major Enquiry without physically inspecting the project.** Whether qualified or not to carry out our brief assignment to identify issues concerning the arts in country areas of Victoria, we at least visited and interviewed people in Ballarat, Ararat, Hamilton and Geelong. For their Enquiry, *Theatre Australia* could not make it from Newcastle to Sydney to visit our office and check their facts.

In sum, we feel that *Theatre Australia* perhaps needs A R T S Ltd more than most people.

Yours sincerely,
Timothy Pascoe
National Director, A.R.T.S. Ltd
Woollahra, NSW

The Editor responds

Theatre Australia's enquiry into the activities of A R T S was prompted by many letters [illegible] by you, [illegible] the [illegible] comparative [illegible] the Sydney Theatre Company seminar. [illegible] fewer would attribute their [illegible] to this.

1 [illegible] the amount as raised by Dr Pascoe.

2 Whether the specific figures [illegible] and profit [illegible] seems hardly relevant.

The point would seem to us to be [illegible] high figure on the worth of [illegible] "donated" to the arts.

3 A R T S is raising money, if it does not [illegible] from artists [illegible] may generate funding then an [illegible] of importance would appear to be [illegible] the middle — however one defines the role of a middleman.

4 Though only one specific person was quoted as saying the A R T S management course was too long, it represented the view of several leading participants at the seminar who either [illegible] or were [illegible] by Theatre Australia.

On the lateness question it was certainly some time — I was there and I verify the writer's remarks. And Dr Pascoe's and "hard evidence" has gone awry when he cites me as "one of the five" asked to follow up the small magazines seminar. It was in fact the then Melbourne publisher — with whom our association lasted within a matter of months — not the editor of Theatre Australia.

4 I can only wonder at the extent of the help given to the other seventy-nine unspecified individuals when my desperate pleas received the response to the effect "You know the funding organizations as well as I — what else can I say?" Our conversation — by telephone — lasted no more than a few minutes.

Of course we attempted to confirm what the Ministry wanted — unfortunately we can give no account of what was said in camera to us.

5 A R T S does receive money from the private sector. What else can we say? The analogy with film awards does not hold. That is in some sense a whole industry tribute to itself. If the awards are part of the cost of A R T S can that be proven to be cost effective?

6 This point seems petty. Were Dr Pascoe a journalist he would understand such

(Continued over page)

things as printer errors which are never so frequent as with proper names.

7. I am pleased that Dr Pascoe has the funding to go on tours of Victoria personally. I can't see what looking at his desk, telephone and filing cabinet could have added to the length of discussion.

How can it be suggested that A.R.T.S. should enquire into itself? Only the police force do that and gain nothing in reputation by it.

Editor

Craft Australia and A.R.T.S.

Dear Sir,

I was disappointed with the article "Do We Need A.R.T.S.?" in the August issue of *Theatre Australia* offering as it did only a series of negatives. The kind of journalism which slants an article towards the negative side because it suits the current thinking of the journalist involved or the publication itself, rather than giving an objective view is really to be deplored.

However to set the record straight as I know it regarding the Seminar on small publications let me first of all say that the original idea for a seminar was mine and did not come from A.R.T.S. Jane Burns, Executive Officer of the Crafts Council of Australia and I called upon Dr Pascoe at A.R.T.S. to discuss the idea of such a seminar and to test his reaction. As we came hard upon the heels of *Theatre Australia* itself then in one of its financial downs, Pascoe could see that there was merit in the idea and proceeded to work out the required questionnaire (a specialist task), distribute it, have it analysed and through the assistance of the Australia Council eventually chair a meeting for us. This meeting was not delayed for hours. The only problem was something to do with the equipment available and was a matter of minutes not hours.

The seminar was very successful. As I had suspected the editors found a great deal in common. If nothing else occurred beyond the fact that we were brought together to discuss mutual problems that in itself was worth doing. The follow up which had nothing to do with Dr Pascoe was where the embryo Magazine Arts Group fell down. Elected temporary chairman of the group I found great difficulty in finding enough time to do the very things that Dr Pascoe had achieved with such apparent ease. As Sam Ford Smith commented we held several informal meetings, discussed our most alarming problem (no manuals) and even conceived a number of self-help ideas all of which required both administrative help and money to achieve. A proposal was put to the Australia Council for promotional funds, which as far as I know has never actually been refused. It is still a matter of getting the Magazine Arts Group to present a cohesive face, to organise itself with all the usual paraphernalia of reports, meetings, plans, project budgets et al. I don't despair but feel strongly that this will happen. The immediate past has been for me and I believe many other editors who for the most part are the sole journalistic employees of the magazines they edit, so intensely busy that extra curricular activities, no matter how worthwhile have simply had to be postponed. The important thing for all of us is after all to get our magazines out. *Theatre Australia* employees (if there are in fact any such rare creatures there) will no doubt agree.

Now let me add some of the comments which I passed on to *Theatre Australia* and which fell on the cutting room floor. The Crafts Council of Australia has found the association with A.R.T.S. very rewarding. Dr Pascoe has advised us on many matters and is currently assisting us to develop an Arts Administrators Organisation which may hopefully become a professional association for the emerging world of arts administration, which currently has neither rhyme nor reason. People working to administer all the arts are currently and all manner of salaries or not at all, and work with most extraordinary hours. If A.R.T.S. did not exist, there might be a look to find an organisation able to research and help to establish guidelines for such an organisation. It really does take more than goodwill and enthusiasm to make these things happen as I found with M.A.G.

April Hesse,
Editor,
Craft Magazine.

ITI and Playwrights' Conference

Dear Sir,

Two disappointments.

In the obituary for Robert Quentin on page 4 of your August number there is no mention of Professor Quentin having been the long-term President of the Australian Centre of the International Theatre Institute, although he is spoilt as the author of an article in your May issue and his name appears at the head of the ITI page in the January number of *Theatre Australia*, as well as in many past numbers.

2. Like me, other readers must have deplored the mischievous piece which appeared on page 9 in the July issue under the pseudonym "Douglas Flintoff" and purporting to "assess" the 1979 Australian National Playwrights Conference for *Theatre Australia*. The account is malicious and misleading. Under the facetious guise of dispensing well-meaning advice from on high cheap points are scored off just about everyone concerned with the ANPC. Playwrights ("they have their private garret passions to nurse"), actors ("that group of little battlers"), and directors ("they are always a problem") are patronised, but the most inaccurate witticisms are ejected at the hapless committee members who spend all year collectively organising the annual playwrights' conference ("the pathetic performance of the academics and critics who used to run the show"), and some of the observers who are sufficiently interested to attend ("all the conference were also various cliques of agents, administrators and academics who are beneath our notice here"). Altogether your extraordinary reporter has it in for academics and critics. Sure some valid criticism could be levelled both at the operation of this year's Playwrights' Conference and at the long-term validity of the concept for Australian theatre. But negative journalism only harms the cause. I'm sure that *Theatre Australia* could have got a more honest appraisal of the 1979 ANPC from many of the 250-odd participants.

Sincerely,

Marlis Thiersch,
Secretary ITI,
Sydney.

PS: It was particularly fainthearted to publish the piece under a pseudonym because mention at the beginning of "little Bobby Ellis" and of "Bob Ellis (again)" at the end might point to this prominent critic as author, no other name being called for were it not for the fact that he is a member of the ANPC's committee and is therefore co-responsible for its policy, structure, operation and alleged "lack of vision". Another disqualifying factor is that unlike Flintoff, Ellis knows very well that dramaturgs are a liaison between playwrights and theatre professionals at the Conference and come from the maligned class of academics and critics.

Douglas Flintoff replies

I in turn am disappointed that Dr Thiersch has failed to appreciate the idealism and romantic tomfoolery of the unpartisan of the Playwrights' Conference that informed my "mischievous" remarks. The main point of the piece was that the playwrights with their garret passions and the battling actors were the only people who gave the conference the excitement it did have.

I have always argued against the anti-intellectual, philistine disregard of academics and critics in Australian theatre. In this case I think that they have neglected the Playwrights' Conference abominably and I know that very few members of the General Committee of the Conference, Dr Thiersch and few others excepted, even bothered to attend.

Douglas Flintoff, Brooklyn NSW.

PS: Little Bobby Ellis has a lot to offer, and in his more nostalgic moments I wish I were he, but alas it is just that he says things worth quoting.

SPOTLIGHT

Nimrod's New Deal

By Katharine Brishane

Nimrod theatre began in 1970 as a dissenting party in revolt against the established politics of Sydney theatre. It was a writers' theatre — even an academic theatre, one might say, since the element which held the founders together was their time as members of the Sydney University Dramatic Society (with the exception of Michael

Photograph: Peter Holt Press

Neil Armfield

Boddy, who had only come down from Oxford).

But what made Nimrod so quickly successful was the time (It's Time!) and the place (old Nimrod Street, where we all perched like battery hens under the galvanised roof, wondering who would lay an egg), but more importantly the educated perception of the founders about the rapidly changing times.

The first performances were group creations, of which *Hamlet on Ice* remains the most memorable and widely performed. By degress *Flash Jim Vaux, The Removalists, Rooted* — the role of the writer as a single voice asserted itself. Soon the old theatre became too cramped and there was an uneasy period of adjustment to the demands of a larger building, there have been other periods of disaffection from Australian writing and of experiment for its own sake, and the gradual building up of the most far-seeing PR system of any theatre, with the exception of the Music Hall, Neutral Bay.

In short, Nimrod has had a healthy history of self-doubt and self-wrenching out of complacency every year or two. The rising audience success of the past three years has made complacency a growing danger. As John Bell told *The Australian*: "In the past Nimrod has had a reputation for taking risks. It still does but it has lost its reputation. Nimrod needs to question not only its failures but its successes."

So the announcement of Kim Carpenter and Neil Armfield as two new artistic directors (in the face of strong competition from almost every director in Australia) should not really have come as the surprise it was, looking back on Nimrod's long determination not to follow the pattern of other theatres. This year, following the demise of the Old Tote Theatre, the temptation to complacency has been greater than it ever was.

The vacancy occurred with the departure of Richard Wherrett to run the new Sydney Theatre Company. And again Nimrod went about the appointment in a democratic manner unique (unfortunately) to them, of consulting, at a series of levels all those people who are employed by or do business with the theatre. Out of these meetings came the thought that an artistic director need not be a theatre director — that he could earn part of his salary from other areas of the annual budget.

At one meeting the name of John Gaden, a long-time Nimrod star, was lobbied by supporters. The idea of a writer was much favoured by Bell and Ken Horler, because of the theatre's early history (and, though this is conjecture, the fact of David Williamson having moved to Sydney would not have escaped notice). But the writers' vote was in favour of better directors and more experiment for their work — and some were nervous of the idea of another writer sitting in

Kim Carpenter

judgement on their newborn creations.

And so, characteristically, Nimrod has come up with a pair who will certainly take the theatre in yet another direction, particularly new writing. Among the younger writers there is already a strong movement away from realism, and for the directors who were brought up in the decade of social conscience this kind of writing is not easy to access.

Carpenter, who at 29 has had ten years working as a designer of theatre and opera in Sydney and Melbourne, is an idealist with strong views about

the opportunities open to a writer who works initially with a designer as a director. He believes our writers are restricting themselves to their own disadvantage by thinking in terms of realistic sets, and he thinks directors are restricting themselves by reading scripts primarily in terms of words.

Carpenter is after a new form of theatre that is nearer to conceptual art — and he has plenty of ideas about how to achieve it. If his plans grow to maturity his plays will expand out of the theatre as far as the foyer and beyond.

Taking a different track but heading in the same direction is Armfield, who at 24 is a new generation from the same Sydney University Dramatic Society stable with all the ambitions for changing the pattern of Sydney theatre that the founders of Nimrod had when they graduated.

Armfield's experience has been largely in student theatre last year he held a post-graduate research scholarship to work on Ben Jonson and as part of his research did a highly environmental production of *Bartholemew Fair*. The production was a great success with all but his supervisors who saw it as no great contribution to his thesis, and cut off his grant.

All was not lost, however. The production of Barry Keefe's *Gimme Shelter* which followed drew the attention of the Nimrod directors, who offered him the direction of David Allen's *Upside Down at the Bottom of the World*, at Nimrod Downstairs. This inventive production has extended its season and a tour to other States is being planned.

Armfield is clearly to be groomed as director of the Downstairs Theatre, to work with new writers and to make it a happening place as the old Nimrod once was. But in his own way, of course.

It is a good start. The effects will begin to be seen early next year when the Sydney Theatre Company too, will open its doors. The stir-up which the pattern of Sydney Theatre has had over the past 18 months could not have been healthier for the profession, an the home-truths which have landed backstage at Nimrod during the tiring process of decision have done a lot to clear the air. All that remains now is to wish them luck.

Martin Esslin

By Colin Duckworth

MARTIN ESSLIN, formerly Head of BBC Radio Drama, is now Professor of Drama at Stanford University, California. He is a world authority on Brecht, Beckett, Pinter and absurdist theatre and has just completed a brief lecture tour in Australia.

I have never, on any of the occasions I have heard Professor Esslin speak, known him to be stumped for a detailed and informative answer. His range of knowledge, from classical to contemporary theatre throughout the world, is not only deep and scholarly, but eminently practical. Despite having been tucked away in BBC studios for 37 years (13 of them as Head of Radio Drama), he always kept his passion for the stage not only alive but in a state of continual development from his early interest in Brecht; he went on to formulate the first study in depth of the "theatre of the absurd" (the concept of which he, to some extent, created), then concentrated on Beckett and Pinter long before they became household words.

What kind of background and training was responsible for this dramatic-sensitivity?

"My father was a journalist in Vienna and had a lot of free tickets, so from the age of eleven I used to go frequently to theatre and opera. When the time came to choose a career, theatre seemed the most accessible way of getting into artistic life, of being with literary people. In the German context, I wanted to be a *dramaturg*, playwright or director. To this end I applied to get into the Reinhardt seminar in Vienna — and was accepted. They took about 20 out of 400 each term. At the same time, as I wanted to be a writer, I went to the University and studied English and Philosophy."

Respect for drama was natural in European universities, theatre was regarded as the peak of intellectual activity — whereas in the English-speaking academic world Esslin recalls, theatre used to be thought unworthy of serious consideration — hence the difference between German, English and French critical approaches.

"In Germany theatre critics tend to be professional: they tell you about the philosophical and literary value of the play and then there's a final paragraph about the performance. In the English-speaking world the theatre critic is a consumer guide: he's telling you whether it's worth spending your money to go to this show. Newspapers treat critics differently too: in the English-speaking world an editor will say, 'You are the average man, you shouldn't know anything about the play or the author since the man in the street doesn't know anything either', whereas the German critic is expected to be an intellectual and will do a lot of research beforehand so that he can guide the audience intellectually. In France critics have much more urbanity and recognise the value of theatre as a means of entertainment — boulevard theatre still being important and of a high standard."

Esslin's training, then, was scholarly and traditional. How is it that he has been so quick to appreciate the originality of avant-garde playwrights such as Beckett, Ionesco and Pinter, whilst critics generally lag behind?

"Fortunately, I have never been a daily reviewer, mostly I have written for monthlies like *Plays and Players*. Instant criticism is very difficult. Original plays are often bewildering and bewilderment needs a bit of time to simmer down. In fact, the best avant-garde theatre may not be appreciated for a couple of weeks after seeing it — but by that time your negative review is in print."

What critical method has Martin Esslin worked out for himself? Strangely enough, a largely instinctive one, rather than intellectual.

"Whilst there are technical, objectively assessable qualities, at the core of criticism there is simply one's gut-reaction. I feel the critic must be totally open and unprejudiced, willing to trust his instinct. So when I am watching or reading a new play I simply observe my gut-reaction. If it has a hundred pages and I am flipping over the pages by page 25 it means I am

(Continued over page)

getting bored, if I am falling about with laughter in the theatre, I have to use the analytical side of my brain and find out why I am laughing.

"In some ways I'm very primitive when I go to the theatre I expect to have an experience and I don't resist it. When I saw my first Pinter play I couldn't understand what it was all about, but I thought it was the best dialogue I had heard for years, there must be something to this writer. Afterwards, I sorted out the ideological and artistic background. I approached other absurdist plays with the same kind of innocence. One of the first I saw was Adamov's *Le Ping-Pong*. To begin with it seemed utter nonsense, but as it went on I recognised it as one of the most brilliant transpositions of Marxist alienation into dramatic terms.

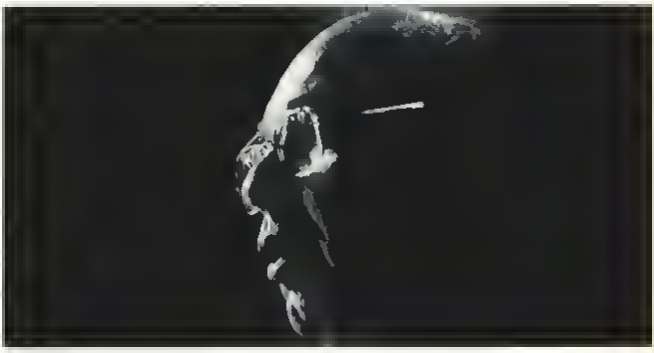
"One of the main qualities that both the critic and the director have to have is to be the most experienced old harlot and a virginal young girl. He must know the play best and be able to look at it as though he had never seen it before."

Who should be doing drama criticism? It is often assumed by newspapers that any reporter who can cover a flower-show can review a play.

"This is nonsense, of course. Ideally they should be specially trained. In America we have drama departments offering courses in critical analysis. Many good reviewers — Kenneth Tynan, for instance — have had experiences in theatre, but above all, the critic should be such a good writer that even non-theatregoers read him because he is brilliant and amusing — and then go to see the play. That is the critic's missionary task."

Both in newspapers and in the academic world, Esslin thinks, the critic must transcend his material and give something more than judgements about theatricality. Since the theatre mirrors the world, he says, the best criticism should use the theatre to shed light on the world in general, showing the political, historical, philosophical and aesthetic implications of what drama shows to us.

"For example, when I wrote on Brecht, I was interested in the conflicts that arise when a poet wants to be a political animal. The subject was not just Brecht, but the whole problem of art-versus-politics."



Finally, I asked Martin Esslin where the motive force for vitality and originality is coming from now — the fringe, or institutionalised theatres?

"It used to come from fringe theatres, but as institutionalised theatres have taken up the cause of new writing, a crisis has hit the fringe theatres, which are no longer getting the good scripts. The National, the RSC, Manchester and Nottingham are snapping them up. The Royal Court has been getting the leavings. Bond, for example, went straight into the Olivier with *The Woman* — and you couldn't have a more spectacular production. But one can trust the fringe to find something shocking that won't get into the national theatres yet!"

Colin Duckworth was drama critic of the *NZ Listener* and *Sunday Herald*, has written books on modern French theatre, especially Beckett, Ionesco and Tardieu. He is now Professor of French at Melbourne University.

Paul Dainty

By Raymond Stanley

"I am going to try and bring in as much international entertainment like Deborah Kerr to the Comedy as possible. It's going to be operating the same way as before. It's not going to be a rock concert venue or anything like that. It's going to remain a theatre. It will never have a rock show in. I'm hoping that we can do plays like *Night And Day*, or a musical like *They're Playing Our Song*, with equivalent overseas stars."

With these words English entrepreneur Paul Dainty immediately dispelled any fear anyone might entertain as to the future of Melbourne's Comedy Theatre, which he purchased last year.

It really all started for Dainty in the early 1970s when he was working for agents in England who handled Roy Orbison, then making one of his Australian tours. Orbison was encountering problems, necessitating someone from England to sort them out. Dainty, only 22 at the time, was delegated. Orbison, appreciative of Dainty's efforts, put the idea in the young man's head that perhaps he himself should present rock groups in Australia.

Dainty, who had started up his own rock promotions within the agency, was now rather restless. He decided the time was right to take a gamble, if the worst happened he could always get a good job and earn good money with an agency. "But it wasn't just the money", he stressed. "I didn't want to work with someone else. I like freedom. I'm not a nine to five person."

He knew several rock groups such as The Hollies and noticed how big they were in Australia. He suggested they toured the country, and arranged it all. The Hollies did amazing business here and even Dainty was surprised. After The Hollies came The Bee Gees and other groups, all highly successful.

"I was doing it sparingly, basing myself in London and going back and forth. I wasn't setting up a big office or operation here but booking an attraction and then coming here and more or less doing everything from a hotel or small office."

The next tour suddenly happened. "I managed to get Cat Stevens at that time. He was astronomical here, like the Neil Diamond of '72. We just had a run of five or six tours which were hugely successful, they were all incredibly successful.

"And when we got the Rolling Stones in '73 it was a coup. So then things just rolled on from there and we've done about 70 acts now."

An understanding with major rock promoters in England, who are his friends and of his age group, has helped Dainty.

"I won't enter their area and vice versa. And we work together. All the artists I tour here – like ABBA and Fleetwood Mac, the Stones and what have you – they tour throughout England and Europe. We work our schedules out together and talk to each other constantly."

Paul Dainty did extremely well financially with those rock tours.

"But I didn't want to become a concert promoter who just made the money and said 'Thank you very much' and ran. We never did that. We left the money here and built the company up and tried to consolidate it a bit, so that we could become part of the establishment."

Purchasing the Comedy he says was an investment. "It all fell into place. We were looking for an office building and the Comedy happened to be for sale around that time."

Dainty also was wanting to get into the more "legitimate" field of theatre. He had of course co-presented the highly successful tour of *Doctor in Love*, as well as the not so successful *Love Thy Neighbour*. But he stresses he has no intention of leaving the pop field.

"Oh no! No way! It's too big a business for me to give up. But we're going to be more selective. Not just for us, but for the artists as well, because Australia can take only so much. I think there's been too much entertainment. No one's excited any more. Deborah Kerr has created some excitement coming here. Most artists haven't lately. They just come in, just another artist!"

Dainty anticipates staging two or three productions of his own at the Comedy each year, each running for about seven weeks. *The Day After The Fair* is a co-presentation with the MLC Theatre Royal Company of Sydney, because the Theatre Royal happens to be a "sister" size theatre. However, it does not follow that all of Dainty's theatrical attractions will be presented with the MLC.

The importation of Deborah Kerr is causing much activity at the box office, which probably would not have occurred with a local actress.

"If we bring an overseas artist in there's always the ballyhoo from a lot

of people. People normally say it's the union. As far as I'm concerned we've always had a good relationship with the unions. Okay, we've got Deborah Kerr in — who's an overseas import. We've got Frith Banbury who's the director, and also an overseas import. I think that's quite justified. People want to see Deborah Kerr — bookings prove that. Frith Banbury's done the play before, and it's right for him to direct Deborah in the play."

He pointed out that all the other people connected with the production are Australian and that the people who work for him are also.

"I don't agree with the argument of some people that it puts Australians out of work. It doesn't. Because if I didn't bring Deborah in the Comedy would be empty. There'd be no work for anyone."

When he bought the Comedy he had a short list of people he was after, and Deborah Kerr was one of them. "We started talking to her last year and she said initially: 'Well, I would be interested in coming to Australia, depending of course on the vehicle.' *The Day After The Fun* came up for obvious reasons. she's done it successfully in London, she did it on tour successfully in America. She likes the play, it's a play that the public like. it's got a track record."

I asked Dainty if his pop attractions might perhaps subsidise his more "legitimate" operations. "It could well be. Pop attractions subsidised *Love Thy Neighbour*. But I'm hoping that won't happen too often. I'm quite blunt about it and I don't feel embarrassed to say.. We're in business to make money."

Dainty said the intention is to re-invest the money into refurbishing and renovating the Comedy Theatre. "We're starting with the offices, which of course the public won't see but that's important for us because we'll be ensconced there for years and years. And then Christmas we'll start doing all the backstage area and the dressing rooms up. I'm hoping in the next 18 months or two years we'll get to the problem about new seating and carpetings. It's a very expensive business, so we've got to do it in stages. But I plan to keep the style of the theatre — just bring it back to standard. Basically the theatre's in excellent condition but it does need some work done to it".

With Kenn Brodziak likely to retire from his active and most respected leadership in the Australian theatre world next year, it seems to me we might have a very worthy contender for that position in Paul Dainty. I was impressed by his obvious sincerity, his gentle manner and his determination to make the Comedy as successful an operation as the tours of his rock attractions have been over the years.

"I'd rather have the Comedy dark than have some play on that we know is going to just not do the business. And luckily with the Comedy it doesn't cost a fortune to keep it dark. I'm sure we're going to operate 50-70 weeks a year anyway".

ROBYN ARCHER

Profile by Virginia Duigan

Photograph Robert McFarlane

The National Theatre in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda was the logical place to stage *Tonight Lola Blau* Robyn Archer's latest show, a cafe-cabaret set in wartime Vienna needs an audience that feeds off it It needs the emotional response that comes only from shared racial memories

One Saturday night during the season the audience of 600, predominantly Jewish predominently of the war generation, rose in their seats and stopped the show after one particularly tearing number St Kilda is the mecca for these emigre Germans and Eastern Europeans, as you need only stroll down Acland Street on a Sunday to see and the National was the right choice for *Lola Blau*

It was the right choice only if a smoke-filled basement nightclub was not available This, by rights, is Robyn Archer's natural habitat With her husky, vibrant voice great mane of crinkly chestnut hair and face full of shadows she is a creature of the night, rquiring a sophistication of response that is eased by the opiates of cigarettes and booze

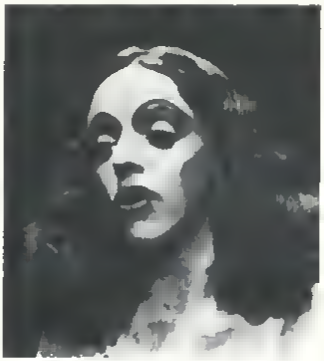
Lola Blau is the autobiographical creation of Jewish American Georg Kreisler, who as a 16-year-old moved with his family from Vienna to Hollywood in 1938 Archer's rendering of the piece is its English language world premiere, with a script from Don White White was co-founder of Opera Rara in 1970 and since 1972 has been engaged largely in opera translation

The well-staged production (director Ted Robinson, designer Silvia Jansons, musical direction Dale Ringland) makes dynamic use of slides and tapes, with minimal props that are shifted by Archer herself It is basically a medley of songs charting the career of a nightclub singer, moving from Vienna to the States and home against the backdrop of jackboots and Juden slogans

One begins with inevitable reservations, given the recent proliferation of Berlin-cabaret material There has been almost a nostalgic fashion in what one might call decadence chic, much of it (*Cabaret*) brilliantly staged, much (Weill, Lenya) with words and music of surpassing atmosphere Against the welter of competing quality Kreisler does not quite measure up His tunes are rarely instantly riveting, his words, in translation anyway, lack that edge of wit and bite that characterises the greatest cabaret lyrics

But with Robyn Archer on centre stage these become, to a large extent, quibbles She is big enough to carry deficiencies in material, and sufficiently versatile to endow a piece with light, shade and apparently endless tonings in between She ranges from a sphinx with an asphalt voice to a white-face clown, a vamp to a vulnerable girl in a pale nightgown, singing with nightingale purity

Archer chooses only to do material that is important to her This has caused problems in the past and undoubtedly will continue to do so in the future She is not a performer to be typecast After her previous sell-out



show, *A Star Is Torn* a celebration of the lives of some of the greatest female singers of the century she had a country-wide audience clamouring for more of the same thing, and feeling let down when they got something substantially different

"At the moment I am in the middle of a hefty theatre patch With *Lola* I have gone further into standard theatre territory People tend to think that the next thing you do is the way you have irretrievably gone — that you are some sort of turncoat They don't think of *Lola* as one show in five years, or that you might have ten other things planned, that you might be singing anarchist political theatre in the evening and writing hardline feminist songs in your motel room at night "

Or, one might add, working on Brecht songs in the morning a play about Lorenzo de Medici and your own original script for yourself and actress Robyn Nevin for the next Adelaide Festival at midday, and listening to the songs of Dolly Parton and Joan Sutherland in the afternoon

Dolly and Dame Joan are Archer's twin heroines The links she perceives between two such outwardly contrasting figures are revealing for Archer's own priorities

"Dolly Parton a great singer, a fine musician who rose from abject poverty via sheer energy and determination to the absolute top of her business She is incredibly honest, it seems to me Her eyes are so good You only have to look at her eyes to know she's a good person I love everything about her professionally She is just idyllic "

Robyn Archer also rose from an honest working class background and has kept in touch with her roots There were not books in the house and no piano, even though her father was a cheerful pub'n'club entertainer and her grandfather presented her with a clapped-out guitar Her future was decided (although she was not to admit it for more than a decade) at the age of 12 when she used to stand in the schoolyard and belt out "Jailhouse Rock" to a crowd of 50 kids But she was smart enough to be seduced by more obviously intellectual games

She won a scholarship to university, did a BA and the Dip Ed and taught on and off, singing off and on at nights too, until she was 26 Then came an offer she could not refuse from the South Australian Opera and Robyn Archer was away

Opera remains a love She has been trying to meet Sutherland for many years "If I talk about Joan Sutherland and Dolly Parton in the same breath it's because I really admire the way they run their careers Sutherland has said she will be singing until she is in her mid-60's — that is such an important thing for someone in her position to be saying, when singers are expected to burn out so early "

Archer considers the partnership of Bonynge and Sutherland to be one of the great collaborations of the century "I hate the divisiveness some people

apply to partnerships, the way they snipe at individuals. Clearly one of the reasons Dame Joan is how she is is that Richard Bonynge is one of the most fantastic vocal coaches there has ever been."

Archer admires Sutherland, like Parton, for the bold initiatives she has been prepared to take in her career. Last year Sutherland's *Norma* was widely reckoned her best ever. She has not followed the standard pattern of taking on lesser roles as her voice changes, and now she is talking of doing Wagner.

Obviously an opera singer is protected in a way that a singer like me is not, fewer performances, the opportunity to rest the voice. Whereas we're all out for ultimate ruination because the people in the business are not interested in long term voices. They are interested in markets. If anyone thinks beyond five or six years they are considered extremely perceptive — but Bonynge thinks about fourteen years ahead."

She is indignant about many aspects of the business in Australia. *A Star Is Torn* illustrates graphically the lure of the spotlight and its insidious artifice. Artists like Bessie Smith, Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe, Edith Piaf, Janis Joplin all died early and under tragic circumstances. Robyn Archer is determined, and convinced, that in years to come her own name will not be added to this grim roll call.

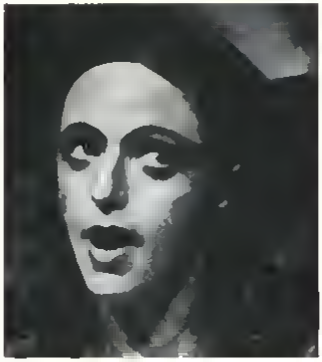
Performing for her is an important part of life but never the only one. If her voice disappeared tomorrow she would simply reorganise her life, write plays, songs, translate, go to the opera.

"At this stage I'm more famous than a bloody working class kid ever thought she would be. But the minute I'm not enjoying it, or it's ceased to be a learning experience, I'll give it up. I could stop singing tomorrow and it wouldn't worry me in the least."

Her personal life is organised and, in so far as it can ever be, tranquil. With her manager partner Diana Manson she lives in a rambling house in the Sydney suburb of Petersham. The Archer Manson partnership (they formed a company last year) has no conspicuous financial assets to date. They drive a beat-up Kombi van, they are paying off the house and their last holiday was two years ago in Europe.

Their home abounds in early cookers. Previously it was a rooming house for old men, divided into six bedsitters. The divisions still exist, and will stay there until there is enough loot in the coffers to pay for renovations. While money would buy freedom, one gets the impression that neither Archer nor Manson cares greatly for material rewards, although essential comforts like food and drink rate highly. During dinner parties at the Petersham house Manson, an exceptional cook, can be glimpsed rushing from stove to stove, since only portions of each cooker actually work.

Next door is another identical boarding house for nine single men, who take much notice of the artistic menage alongside and water the garden when they are away. It is a friendly street. Portuguese family opposite, Italians and Greeks a few



doors up and a strong Latin American influence pervading the area.

"It's much more comfortable here than Balmain, where I lived before. you feel right out among people. I'd love to be here more and more, but it's not likely for a couple of years."

Two years at least. After Sydney, *Lola Blau* goes to Perth and Canberra until mid-November. Next, Archer and Manson plan to storm the Big Apple, New York, and thence to Toronto for a production of her own script *The Conquest of Carmen Miranda*. A working holiday. Christmas will be spent in London with some people who in a short time have become old and dear friends: the family of distinguished English Brecht scholar John Willett. After Christmas there is the prospect of recording the fruits of this collaboration - an album of Brecht songs.

Willett and his wife Anne are of an older generation, and their friendship has been a personal revelation for Archer. "I feel such an ignoramus, discovering something that has always been inherent in other cultures. the experience of having close warm friends of one's parents' age. They are the only people who say things that really shock me because of my lack of awareness, the only people who will tell me what crap I'm sometimes talking. It's the first time age has been no barrier for good times."

Now 31, Archer has contrived to keep her options open. "I'm not into people saying, you do one thing so well, why don't you do it all the time? How can I possibly do that? You learn to overrule the lack of vision that says you will only do what you do best. In a long career that will be just one of many things you will do."

Next February she will be back to rehearse for the Adelaide Festival, then on to Sydney, Adelaide and Perth with an augmented version of *Star*. After that the intention is to try for the Edinburgh Festival and beyond that — London. As always in show business, the success of a London run will hang on the fickle indeterminates of right place, right time, right mood. They could plan to be away for 12 months and end up with a two week season in London.

Which would have its advantages. Archer is hoping for a six month period when she is out of work. In that time she will take up an offer from the Berliner Ensemble, to learn German and study Brecht. Brecht's episodic, revue-cabaret style is deeply in tune with her own rather knockout temperament.

"Oh, I know people are itching to see me get a band together and go on the road, to go back to the vulgar country and western feminist yodelling. And I ache for it too. But one can only do so much. I am interested in the long span, rather than gig to gig. And I do have a fairly determined plan to stay alive and healthy and working into my 80's."

Let's all drink to that.

THE TIME IS RIPE

Interview with Ruth Cracknell

"I think there's an awful responsibility on Ron and me in this play - or on the Australian public. If they don't come to this for whatever reason Peter Williams is not going to be able to continue. Would you think he could? If he puts thousands into something that doesn't do well his backers are going to back off fast, aren't they?"

So says Ruth Cracknell of her latest play *The Gin Game*, in which Peter Williams is producing directing her and Ron Haddrick. She feels most strongly about the use of Australian talent as opposed to imported, and has great admiration for Peter Williams in his virtual one-man stand against the imported star syndrome. Williams had two considerable successes, with *Bedroom Farce* and even more so with *Crown Matrimonial*, but *Tribute* was a less happy venture, and Ruth feels that a failure with *Gin Game* to follow might be too much for his production house to take.

Without wanting to be foreboding, it does seem, though, that it is the English as opposed to the American scripts that are having a deal more success around Australia at the moment. For Peter Williams, acerbic Ayckbourn and dignified royalty have won over the schmalz of *Tribute*, the ill-fated *Deathtrap* has apparently been the cause of Kenn Brodziak refusing any further attempt to star Australians, and David Mamet

productions in Melbourne and Sydney, have been well eclipsed by Pinter and Bond. But *The Gin Game* is going well in the West End, on Irving Wardle's report, so hopefully it will be the exception that proves the rule, and local talent will be vindicated.

La Cracknell certainly believes in the play. She has reached the position where she only takes on work that interests her, and prefers to do no more than two stage plays a year. *Gin Game* is her second this year — after *The Sea* for Nimrod — and she's "mad about it."

One of the things that excites her most is the difference between the character she plays and herself. "she is so far removed from anything of me that it is a major discovery for me, this part. For one thing she is old, old in a way I have never played an old person before. She's coping with the past always, and she's got no youth in her. Most old people do have that somewhere, it's been in the old people I've known and loved and I hope it will still be in me. But in this character so many things are repressed, and atrophied in her beneath the surface. There's a strange, social sort of attraction, but as you peel her off layer by layer, you find some pretty amazing things."

She then recollects Peter Williams isn't keen for her to talk about the play in this way — it is being billed as a comedy — and says that although it's a painful play it certainly does have a lot of humour in it, some quite outrageous.

Ruth is also very pleased to have found such a good and challenging female role — and along with many actresses feels that Australian writers haven't exploited their female characters enough. "There's a whole area there that hasn't been tapped. The situation of Australian women, the past one, the continuing one and the emerging one, is fascinating in the context of shaping the country. The role of women everywhere — look at the outback, there are amazing stories — has been one where they've been forced to be resourceful, and this has permeated even to suburban life. I don't think that's been done sufficient service in the theatre. When you've got the frustrations that have come up, then the liberation bit, you've got very exciting, interesting and intelligent things happening to Australian women."

Not that Ruth Cracknell has suffered much frustration in her career One of the things she enjoys about the theatre is the lack of discrimination, sexual or otherwise because she has always found the respect between artists to be a non-sexual one That appreciation of personality and ability is something she would like to see spread to the rest of society, and a reduction in the "automatic aggression that has always been there especially from men I think in this country men have always been a bit frightened of women"

In spite of the comparative lack of sexism in theatre, most directors in Australia are men, and working with a woman in that role was part of the reason Ruth particularly enjoyed the experience of making *The Singer and the Dancer* with Gil Armstrong Her fairly recent move into films has really given her a chance to expand and find new areas of capability, and has pushed her, in the last two years, "into top gear" The part of Mrs Raft in *The Sea* came at the right time to take advantage of that, and ranks as a highlight in a long and illustrious career, along with playing Jocasta for Guthrie's *Oedipus* Wherrett and Guthrie are the two directors she has most praise for, the first for the rapport and ease he instills in casts, and the latter for the courtesy and consideration he always showed along with his greatness!

A generally high level of consideration within the British theatre profession was a surprise to Cracknell when she went to London in *What If You Died Tomorrow*, it was her "first experience of what a truly generous professional reaction to a play was Their good manners was an eye-opener, something I had simply not experienced before and I suppose from that moment on I started on my odyssey for a general attitude of generosity in the profession here

"People I come into contact with tend not to bitch in my presence very much which doesn't mean you don't criticise something, you do, but you don't criticise with *glee* In England you felt that if people pointed out something which didn't work, it was done with compassion, while still here there is the feeling that various little people have been just waiting to say 'wasn't that awful' There's no excuse for such a lack of courtesy The big step into the eighties has to be one whereby everyone will have a mutual respect for what people in the profession are doing, and be damned proud of what the best people are doing"

She herself is extremely proud of the Australian theatre and its development over the last few years In her thirty working years the greatest change has been one of quality; with the solid body of committed actors that now exists, who are equal to any in the world, with the fact of a full-time professional theatre where thirty years ago a full-time actor had to earn his or her money from radio, with subsidised theatre, good and bad, but essential. Ruth Cracknell describes herself as an optimist and is sure that the next decade will see enormous strides forward particularly in Sydney where she is based "with the Sydney Theatre Company and Nimrod and the Q, and Peter (Williams) doing what he loves, he's besotted with Australian actors"

More specifically, Richard Wherrett's appointment to the Sydney Theatre Company pleases her greatly, as do the new Artistic Directors of Nimrod Ruth's thirty year perspective allows her perhaps a more objective view of developments and she feels that growth is still required before we are a fully-fledged theatrical nation "It's happening with people like Neil Armfield, who's very bright I think Richard has learned so much in the last six years, his appointment is right now, it wouldn't have been right six years ago John Bell is an exceptional person but I think his area is at Nimrod where he can be flexible and work as an actor and operate in a million different ways. That's what's so exciting, he's going to be a terrific man for Richard to match"

For the moment a lot depends in the commercial field particularly with the retirement of Kenn Brodziak firmly in the offing on the success of *Gin Game* But barring unforseeable mishaps, disasters or a depression of 30's magnitude, Ruth believes that "the eighties are going to be *the* time"

AS MUCH FUN AS A FOOTBALL MATCH?

By Mark Gould

Grahame Bond and Sydney barrister Charles Waterstreet met Jim Burnett while working together as writers on a television playlet in Melbourne in late 1978. Grahame Bond's idea for a stage play interested Jim Burnett, a television writer. They collaborated. A writing binge in Melbourne followed by another in Sydney in early 1979 spawned a comedy with music called *Boy's Own McBeth* "BOMeB" (words by Grahame Bond and Jim Burnett, music by Grahame Bond).

A draft of the play was submitted to the usual subsidised "art" theatres in Sydney and Melbourne. Their reactions ranged from the turgid, "Maybe in six months" to the bourgeois snobbery of "We are too legitimate for that" as if comedy and music were to be looked down upon from the rarified atmosphere of higher theatrical pursuits.

The only positive energy came from NIDA. John Clark advised Grahame Bond to get it on privately, eliminating bureaucratic encumbrance standing between the artists and their work. He supplied a great deal in the way of advice and practical back up.

The worst problem was money. Since grant systems and art houses work too slowly to get something on when the time is right and the energy hot, the decision was made to raise the money privately. Charles Waterstreet, barrister, patron and punter, convinced Grahame Bond that it was easier to raise money than to win the trifecta at Randwick. They did this and the production company, Birnham Wood Holdings, was formed. I was asked to collaborate on directing the play and pre-production started.

The old Kirk Gallery in Surry Hills looked ideal. This building was traditionally an occasional music and cinema venue. To turn it into a workable theatre required rethinking the whole space. The work room became the foyer, the stage had to be rebuilt and the sightlines from the dress circle improved. This was done with timber gleaned from the streets in the nearby industrial suburbs, by the "school carpenter" and a fantastic army of moral supporters, colleagues and friends. A lighting grid and system were built. The theatre was completed with a drape curtain using a hand-operated push-bike mechanism for a winch.

This transformation process took place at night and at the weekends, while the cast rehearsed amidst the sawdust and rubble.

Grahame Bond and I designed a set around the needs of the play. This was embellished by the admixture of available materials, talent and goodwill. As the play grew and changed in rehearsal so did the set. A final touch was to seat a large part of the audience at old fashioned iron frame school desks which had once belonged to Scots College.

The result is a strange collage of

images that feel uncannily like a school room. A portrait of Grahame Bond as Terry Shakespeare by Florentine painter Pea Calioni hangs like a laughing cavalier between the honour boards.

This play has its roots in high schools (both English and Australian) where badly taught Shakespeare, sport and schoolboy inventiveness for coping with their powerless status, stimulate a bizarre social order, language and humour. It is, however, a comedy.

As such it is a performance piece first and foremost. Each performer is required to traverse a wide range of abilities. In the course of a performance each person acts, sings, dances and plays a couple of instruments. The evening is so dense with activity that no one spends much time in the dressing room.

The script demands make this a very difficult play to cast (although other considerations than the one used are possible). We did however manage to find a perfect cast with such a wide range of musical and theatrical skills that this production is a very rich experience indeed. We found the cast among friends and colleagues who were excited by the project and had a need to flex their theatrical muscles.

When I first read the play I thought that it had great potential but needed the right group of performers to claim it and define it. This started before rehearsals began with Rory O'Donoghue arranging the musical feel. He and Grahame Bond have worked together for sixteen years and at times their communication seems almost symbiotic.

Rehearsals began at high energy with a view to making a play from the script in hand. This meant an intensive "workshop" period during which ideas flew like punches. Some were caught - a lot disappeared.

"An all girl female" NO WAY.

"Greek Headmaster and Chinese choreographer for Jewish musical" YES, YES, YES!

So One Extra Dance Company master Kai Tai Chon was employed to choreograph 22 musical numbers. Each performer brought ideas to embellish the production and Melody Cooper co-ordinated the costumes brilliantly. Jim Burnett flew up from Melbourne to contribute to the process - from re-wiring the theatre to re-writing the play.

We found ourselves with too much material. A hard-headed editing process had to take place. Good material had to be cut for the sake of the whole. We took it before the first preview audience. This experience stimulated the final edit. The material was cut and restructured while sustaining the tricky logistics of who does what when.

Two nights later *Boys Own Mc Beth* appeared in a form that approximates the present one. Since opening night the play has been constantly tuned and enriched.

The critical response was very positive, but the audience reaction even more so. They are the ones who really count. We now find ourselves in the enviable position of being the only unsubsidised professional performing group outside the established market place who are supported wholly by its audience in Sydney.

An album of music is being recorded for release. The Adelaide Festival Trust has asked us to play Hobart and Adelaide in the new year. There are plans afoot for a pantomime at Christmas in a venue yet to be specified. In the mean time *Boys Own Mc Beth* continues to please Sydney audiences.

Yes! definitely more fun than a football match!

Boys Own Mc Beth by Grahame Bond and Jim Burnett. Directed by Grahame Bond and Mark Gould. Musical Director Rory O'Donoghue.

Cast: Grahame Bond as Terry Shakespeare, Rory O'Donoghue as Mr Hilton, Nick Lathouris as the Headmaster, Bjorne Oblu as S.S. Shakespeare, Nick Espin as Deputy Shakespeare, Elizabeth Widder as Mrs Mc Beth, Paul Johnstone as the Sailor (Captain).

By Roger Pulvers

Achievement and disappointment

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

At the end of last year, Carol Woodrow left the Canberra Children's Theatre and formed an ensemble. Her work with the Children's Theatre was rarely short of excellent. She had created a truly theatrical acting style, based on the predelections of the group. Now she has formed her own laboratorium — and the word I use is purposely from Grotowski because his influence has always been strong in the group's work.

After six months work the new group — now called Fools Gallery, built around the core of actors she took with her from the old — has presented *Alice in Wonderland*. It has begun in Canberra, at the ANU Arts Centre, and tours to Melbourne and Adelaide, among other places.

This is a production of some achievement and some disappointment. When it achieves its effects there is no doubt of its originality. But overall the interpretation of the prose work is far too literal, and far too wordy.

The striking effects. First there is Alice herself, suspended in mid-air by a rope that lets her, slowly, down — as she falls into her looking-glass world. The theatrical effect here was *effortlessness*. This gave us that true feeling of suspended motion. Again when Alice carries the enormous baby across the space and speaks as if she were only carrying a small infant, without the slightest strain in her voice, our minds are freed from any nagging realism. The fairy-tale was all there. The physical training that the group has done, so thoroughly, pays off at those moments.

Large swings were suspended by ropes, down into the enormous Arts Centre space. This allowed for all sorts of interesting movement, which was always perfectly deft. There was a huge human-supported mushroom, a colourful pepper-in-soup-sneezing scene, and some very fine acrobatic work displayed. Once again the rigorous physical work showed when a character sang, without strain, while standing on the head.

But while the physical work done by the group was evident, the vocal impact was often weak. This can be partially blamed on the space itself which makes any actor fight to be heard. At Reid House, their old venue, this problem would not have been as apparent. But with so much explication in this piece most of the actors will have to treat the voice, as Grotowski does, as a physical gesture in itself.

There were other obstacles. The tea-party was placed, not near the centre, but catty-cornered to a far side. This lessened the bigness of some of the movements, as a character swung on a swing over the table, for instance. The sweep of such gestures appeared small. Also, the fine array of musical instruments at either side — triangles, xylophone, drums, ceramic cups — could have been played much more often, not only for sound-effect value to a particular gesture. This might have given the piece more zip.

There is very much to see in this production. The Fools Gallery is a theatre group developed wholly in this city. I personally feel that it should be established as Canberra's professional theatre and branch out into pieces for adult audiences. But I also feel that the work done before, at the childrens theatre, should be used as a basis for a new style. There was less invention, and less *boldness* in *Alice in Wonderland* than the ensemble is capable of.

Fools Gallery's *Alice in Wonderland*

THEATRE/NSW

State Rep./Lucy Wagner

Two new plays at Nimrod

TRAVELLING NORTH
UPSIDE DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WORLD

By Mick Rodger

Travelling North by **David Williamson** Nimrod Theatre Sydney NSW Opened 29 August 79
Director **John Bell** Designer **Ian Robinson** Stage Manager **Pauline Lee** Lighting Designer **Peter Holderness**
Frank **Frank Wilson** Frances **Carol Raye** Helen **Jennifer Hagan** Sophie **Julie Hamilton** Freddy **Graham Rouse** Sol **Henry Szeps** Jan Attendant **Deborah Kennedy** Cockatoo **Anthony Ingersent**
(Professional)
Upside Down at the Bottom of the World by **David Allen** Nimrod Theatre Downstairs Sydney NSW Open 3 August 79
Director **Neil Armfield** Designer **Eddie Kurzer**
Lawrence **Barry Otto** Frieda **Kerry Walker** Jack **Paul Bertram** Victoria **Sally Cahill**
(Professional)

There is nothing Australians hate more than success People love to chop the successful Australian down to size in order to prove that his success was, afterall, only transitory (It would never have stood up outside Australia!) In this way parochialism becomes a comfortable cringe

Of all successful Australian theatre practitioners nobody has attracted more of this frustrated mediocre flak than David Williamson

Williamson belongs firmly in the tradition of the Comedy of Manners His style is one of apparently reflective naturalism pushed deliberately off-centre by witty, caustic and well observed comedy His critics say the plays are superficial and the comedy glib, his admirers claim they are accurate and wildly funny

Perhaps in answer to his more dubious critics Williamson has tried to do something completely different in his latest play *Travelling North* and, again, it is immensely successful in its own terms but one audience member behind me murmured "It's alright but it's not as funny as his other plays, is it?" It would seem that Williamson is about to be hoisted on a petard that others have made for him

The writing in *Travelling North* has restraint and dignity At the centre of the play is a gentle and quiet truthfulness which affords a balance to the robust almost anarchic comedy When the jokes come, they do not seem to be tacked on for good measure as in *The Club* but rather to be explosive results of the situations and differing philosophies of the characters

The dramaturgy of the play is a marked departure for Williamson Instead of a continuously unfolding action, there are some thirty-odd scenes Some follow in rapid staccato fashion, building up a

Kerry Walker (Frieda) and Barry Otto (Lawrence) in Nimrod's *Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World*

dramatic rhythm which compresses time and character The writing here is a confident dramatic shorthand Other scenes are longer and have a more relaxed, even lyrical quality They are almost devoid of humour save for the one telling line which puts everything else into the perspective of that character's single-mindedness

Williamson in effect, tells us at the beginning what will happen at the end Our interest then lies in a detached examination of how it all occurs Consequently, character becomes deeper and more significant than in his previous plays Aside from the septuagenarian Frank (a skilful examination of dominating egocentricity) Frances (who "lives in sin" with Frank) has particular dimension and poignancy

As an excursion into new territory, *Travelling North* is a very sure-footed piece of writing and it has drawn an equally assured production from John Bell The direction matches the writing in economy effect and restraint The early scenes are tautly paced and staged with a sparseness that reinforces the text well High comedy moments are built to in a way which avoids compromising either character or emotional moment

I could have wished that Henry Szeps had shown a more appropriate restraint (the lewishness and the comedy were too big and self-consciously placed) and that Julie Hamilton had been a fraction stronger but these minor worries were more than offset by the centrally powerful performance of Frank Wilson as Frank the truth and integrity of Carol Raye as Frances and the intelligence and perception of Jennifer Hagan's Helen Once out of the crinolines, there is scarcely an actress to touch Ms Hagan in contemporary comedy

This play is Williamson's honest and serious attempt to break with the tradition of his own writing and to grapple with new areas of his own imagination I doubt whether it will be regarded as a success but then his predicament illustrates what an impossible country Australia is for the creative theatre artist

The function of the artist in Australian society is a major preoccupation in *Upside Down At The Bottom Of The World* There is no other playwright that I know of, working in Australia, who has quite the imaginative handling of documentary material as does David Allen

In *Upside Down* Allen coolly juxtaposes Lawrence's writing, historical fact, speculation, observation and downright fantasy with his own original style The result if both lucid and very funny

The spine of the play is not, as it might appear, Lawrence's relationship with his wife Frieda but his association with the Australian next-door-neighbour Jack The scenes with Jack show Lawrence's fear of confrontation, his avoidance of real commitment (either to people or to philosophies), his working class prudery and his unsuccessful attempts to remain apolitical whilst continually talking politics

Whether these were aspects of the *real* David Herbert Lawrence is neither here nor there, it is David Allen's view of Lawrence and a highly imaginative one at that

The Laurentian sojourn also permits Allen (himself an English migrant) to communicate the outsider's detached view of Australia. For Lawrence, it is a mystical view, in the flesh, and part of the living, incarnate cosmos.") For Allen it is a political view.

Neil Armfield's direction alternates between excessive busyness and plodding slowness. The same lights pop on and off without indicating change of place, time or mood. The same lighting, for example, is used to denote both sunny Thirroul and grey Nottingham. There is a self-conscious over-use of irrelevant slides that tediously slows the pace down, emotional confrontations between characters are over-indulged: the direction of much of the comedy is heavy-handed, and above all there is no evidence of the director's understanding of a character's vulnerable moment of self-revelation. For example, the actors play the scene of Lawrence's army medical examination with honesty and commitment but, given how traumatic that experience must have been for the sensitive Lawrence, the director has contributed no emotional tension in his orchestration of it.

The production is, however, worth seeing just for two performances. Barry Otto (who bears an uncanny resemblance to DHL) brings immense skill and poise to the central role and the versatile Paul Bertram plays both Jack and a multitude of peripheral characters with zest and accuracy. This is Barry Otto's best work to date.

The long and the short

LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT
THE GIN GAME

By Lucy Wagner

Long Day's Journey Into Night by Eugene O'Neill. Ensemble Theatre for the Sydney Theatre Company. Drama Theatre, Sydney. Opened 14 September 1979.
Director: **Robert Lewis**. Designer: **Yoshi Tosa**. Lighting: **Ian McGrath**. James Tyrone: **Kevin Miles**. Mary: **Patricia Conolly**. Jamie: **Max Phipps**. Edmund: **David Webb**. Cathleen: **Shaunna O'Grady**.
(Professional)

The Gin Game by D. L. Coburn. Peter Williams Productions. Theatre Royal, Sydney. Opened 14 September 1979.
Director: **Peter Williams**. Designer: **Larry Eastwood**. Weller: **Ron Haddrick**. Fonsia: **Ruth Cracknell**.
(Professional)

A recent theatrical coincidence in Sydney has led to a number of plays about love affairs among the elderly. Following on the heels of *Travelling North*, two American plays dealing, at least in part, with the same theme, opened virtually simultaneously last week: the classic O'Neill, *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, the Ensemble's production at the Drama Theatre, and Peter Williams' latest venture at the Theatre Royal, *The Gin Game*.

O'Neill's autobiographical marathon looks at the relationships of a whole family, with its inter-generational differences and sibling rivalries, but makes its starting point and basis the marriage of James and Mary Tyrone. In spite of the love between them the relationship is a destructive one, leading each to another dependence - him to alcohol, her to pain-killing drugs - and has torn the whole family apart.

The piece is long, even with Robert Lewis' discreet cuts, and needs an inspired production to keep it from boring in the drawn-out dialogues that take up the major part of the play. Lewis is an excellent production with some particularly fine moments, but it is not inspirational. Yoshi Tosa's set is symptomatic: its heightened perspective successfully opens out the postage-slit proscenium and the skeletal windows and doors reflect the image of the house that is a trap, yet not a home for its occupants. But the simple room and four chair curve facing the audience give the actors little variety of movement and the scene little visual interest. Inexplicably the stairs, leading to the unseen menace above, and which are so vital to Mary's final entrance, are missing from this set - along with a view through to the dining room and indoor hall.

As the unhappy and addicted mother, Patricia Conolly managed an ideal blend of coyness and cruelty, despair and delusion; part of the play's greatness is its coherent revelation of the contradictions within each character. David Webb also made the most of this in the O'Neill character, Edmund (an impressive acting debut in Australia), and Max Phipps was splendidly cast as Jamie: the contrastingly debauched but clear-sighted elder brother.

The role of James Tyrone is possibly the most complex, and though Kevin Miles revealed the angry and pathetic sides of the man, he failed to show the charm of the erstwhile matinee idol and his true strength of character.

Charm and anger are the major facets of Weller and Fonsia - the two old characters in D. L. Coburn's *The Gin Game* - as they win and lose their card games and reveal the failures they clocked up in the game of life. The first act sees their superficial charm as they set up the lies about themselves that are then admitted as such in the second. In the first half, therefore, the scene is set with little more than a few laugh lines, while after interval some shock tactics are used in the form of four-letter words from the old dears and the predictable revelations about spouses and offspring are duly made.

The play is gently sentimental but more honest than the razzmatazz schmaltz of *Tribute* and though it is at times low key to the point of boredom, it at least has the virtue of brevity.

The script's greatest strength is as a vehicle for two actors, and Ron Haddrick and Ruth Cracknell make the most of this, playing their characters with an affection and an expertise that adds depth to the text and interest to the production.

Female strengths amid flaws

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST/THE GOLDEN OLDIES.

By Anthony Barclay

The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde. The Q Theatre, Penrith, NSW. Opened 25 August 1979.
Director: **Alexander Hay**. Designer: **Leonie Sharp**.
John Worthing: **Kevin Jackson**. Algernon Moncrieff: **Bill Conn**. Rev. Canon Chasuble: **Alan Biel**. Merriman: **Betty Taugher**. Lane: **Joe James**. Lady Bracknell: **Doreen Warbrton**. Gwendolen Fairfax: **Judy Davis**. Cecily Cardew: **Elaine Hudson**. Miss Prism: **Gae Andersen**.
(Professional)

The Golden Oldies by **Dorothy Hewett**. Jane Street Theatre, Sydney, NSW. Opened 12 September 1979.
Director: **John Tasker**. Designer: **Tom Bannerman**. Lighting Design & Sound: **G. A. C. Lawson**.
Esme Dr Ellie: **Michele Fawdon**. Bobbie Nora: **Carole Skinner**. Radio Announcer: **John West**. Parson: **Cedric McLaughlin**.
(Professional)

The Q-programme notes for *The Importance of Being Ernest* draw comparison, rightly so, between the works of Wilde and Orton. Both writers worked their best plays by employing the formal structure of farce, parodying much within the form, to achieve unique comic art. There is something of a similarity between their sensibilities as dramatists and men. Both created a language of wit and verbal thrust, delightfully constructed but always with a sting in the tail. It was a language that relentlessly exposed the contradictions inherent in mores and conventions, in morals and manners but that relentlessness was tempered by each men's sensuous awareness of life. Simply, neither admonished nor preached, but again neither was any man's fool. It is ironic that both men ended tragically (Orton, violently murdered, Wilde, crushed in spirit) in counterpoint to the elan and flair of their life-styles.

It is one year since I saw the Q's production of Orton's *Entertaining Mr Sloane*, a production full of virtues but one that was no cut throat razor. Similarly I find, with several excellent exceptions, *The*

Importance Of Being Earnest, to lack sting and vivacity.

The reasons are somewhat different this time. I doubt if it is wise to play Wilde's finest comedy in the round, a moot point if one considers the staging limitations of the Q. But not so when actors are so dangerously close to the audience that the delivery of comic wit is blurred into a kind of caricature. This was often the tendency - especially with Bill Conn's Algernon - and the effect was to diminish Wildean wit into the very farce that Wilde was parodying. In a word it was too intimate (or intimidating). Much of the stage business cut across a text that really rests on line delivery, verve and pace - one felt with the repeated sighing and head shaking that one was in a music hall.

But these flaws, and serious enough flaws they are, were countered by Judy Davis' Gwendolen. She was nothing less than superb. Her delivery caught the rich and varied tone of Wilde, matched no less by a grace of movement and posture subtle and sustained. She caught all of Gwendolen Fairfax pompous, mischievous, defiant, confident, a Lady Bracknell in embryo.

Doreen Warburton's Lady Bracknell was performed with similar consumate skill, vocally matching the full-vowel texture, the modulation and requisite pace of the lines. Her's was the large, booming presence the self-assured Lady whose underlying fear of things "modern" allowed Wilde to give her some of his finest witticisms.

Kevin Jackson's Worthing was uneven but confident moving in the right direction in the latter part of the play but occasionally prone to caricature. The rest of the cast I found drawn to caricature, relying too much on stage business and nudge-nudge wink wink so say no more.

Sydney's first performance of Dorothy Hewett's *The Golden Oldies* opened at the Jane Street Theatre for a short season in September. A painful but moving study of three generations of women. Nana (a near corpse represented by a grotesque effigy in the first scene), her daughter Esme, and Esme's youngest daughter Ellie. The world of the play is feminine but the oppressive presence of men is suggested in the effigies behind the screen of Alec (Esme's husband) and Colin (Ellie's husband).

Tasker's first act caught the oppressiveness well - that quality Dorothy Hewett has of confronting death and, by implication, the network of relationships, individual and social, that can be so acutely examined as death approaches. Carole Skinner's Nurse Robbie balanced healthy callousness and clinical thoroughness as she variously pounded and propped Nana in her dying hours. The humour here was savage and humane, that mixture of poetry we associate with the writer. But for me at least, the later scenes of the first act were lacking in pace and clarity.

The second act though was excellent. Michele Fawdon's monologue - a network of memories, dreams, fears, hatreds and loves - brought to the fore that unique capacity of Dorothy Hewett to combine the words of poetry into the flesh and spirit of drama.

Truly Australian humour

RUSTY BUGLES

By Marlis Thiersch

Rusty Bugles by Sumner Locke Elliott, New Theatre, Sydney. Opened 11 August 1979.
Director: John Tasker. Designer: Wooren Field.
(Photo: Michael Dee and Annette Lee)

They've done it again. Sydney's brave New Theatre has realised the historical importance of the play in reviving *Rusty Bugles* by Sumner Locke Elliott for the first time thirty years after its notable premiere on 21 October 1948 at the then flourishing Independent Theatre in North Sydney under the capable direction of Doris Fitton.

It was the first time in a generation that Australians had heard themselves on the stage and the rapturous reception had something to do with the pleasure of recognition. It was also one of the occasions when a small theatre run on a shoe string went into battle for the Australian playwright in the face of attempted censorship by the Chief Secretary.

It is an experience not unfamiliar to the New Theatre whose tradition of resisting censorship includes the suppression of one play in the thirties at the behest of the consul of a European country, and the attempted banning of *America Hurrah* in 1968 when audience demonstrations preceded the lifting of stage censorship. Both these plays were later successfully produced around Australia.

In 1979 *Rusty Bugles* blow exactly as Locke Elliott first wrote his brilliant and honest dialogue, and the play shows itself as a rattling good piece of stage writing with accurately observed and finely individualised characters in the seventeen soldiers marooned in a northern ordnance camp in 1944. The ten "epic" scenes are robustly directed by John Tasker and movingly evoke the sense of isolation and destructive boredom of the phony war, serving as a metaphor for the Australian predicament of isolation, claustrophobia and trying to subsist in a hostile land.

To show what army life does to human relationships — tearing lovers apart and painfully straining family bonds, while concentrating on man-to-man relations — Locke Elliott skilfully uses the rare mail deliveries from down south and rationed phone calls that puncture the monotony and brutality of the long dry season. The all-male amateur cast made the most of the play's surface comedy and the audience laughed again and again at the riotous and truly Australian humour.

Magic ingredient of unity

GODSPELL

By Adrian White

Godspell by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. Riverina Trucking Company Theatre, Wagga.
Directors: Damien Jameson, Stephen Amos. Musical Director: John Rosengren (keyboards) with Michael Stenmark (bass), Ian Jewell (percussion), Robert Van Hilligan (guitar and harmonica). Cast: Jeff Browne, Christin Curran, Delphine Dunford, Rod Lathe, Kerry Grose, Sharon Hillis, Damien Jameson, Scott Knight, Margaret Liddy, Joel Markham, Moses Mullins, Warwick Peters, Elizabeth Pisani, Rubelle Simpson, Debra Swinnerton.
(Photo: [illegible])

Godspell opened at the Trucking Company Theatre on August 12 and may very well usher in a resurrected standard in the company's somewhat chequered performance history this year.

Fast paced, sinewy, consistently electric in its amalgam of song and story, with these qualities directors Jameson and Amos had every reason for celebration. And at last Wagga theatregoers could relish an opening night free from harrowing incident or clear evidence of conflicting artistic opinion within the cast.

As, I suppose a connoisseur of Trucking Company productions, I found *Godspell* possessed the magic ingredient of unity, an ingredient not always present in the company's shows this year. Thus there was an intense focus on the line of the story, with possibly the finest teamwork we've seen from the Trucking Company since the heady days of O'Connell. An almost tangible aura of happiness emanated from the players.

Damien Jameson's portrayal of Jesus was genial and thoughtful, avoiding the lure of histrionics in his enactment of the familiar parables — literature with unique qualities of simplicity and profundity. The musicians, under John Rosengren, were vital, if once or twice drummer Ian Jewell produced sounds more in keeping with a festival centre than with the tiny Trucking Company Theatre. Is this the beginning of the Age of Aquarius for the company?

Jameson's next venture is *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, and if he can build on his present excellent ensemble we should experience a memorable production.

THEATRE/NT

Imaginative and bold setting

MACBETH

By Shirley Molesworth

Macbeth by Shakespeare. Darwin Theatre Group, Darwin NT. Opened 4 August 1979. East Point Gun Turret.
Director **Robert Kimber**. Designer **Terry Kenwrick**. Karen Rykuris.
East Nightcliff High School Students.
Education and Performing Arts Department.

A gun turret on a stark headland, with sea wind and moonlight provide the setting for Darwin Theatre Group's production of *The Tragedy of Macbeth* directed by Robert Kimber. This is the fourth play this year which the group has presented under Robert Kimber's direction and his choice of location for *Macbeth* is imaginative and bold. It presents some difficulties in staging but enhances the atmosphere of a production which is vigorous and vital overall.

The script suffers only few compressions and the cast of over 25 generally handle the poetic language well. The difficulties presented by the character of Macbeth the criminal as tragic hero — are many. In the central character, Terry Kenwrick gives us a Macbeth who is tortured, often into frenzy, by the conflict in himself between ambition and conscience.

Throughout this production there is an awareness of the unusual setting and its advantages which heightens both action and atmosphere. The rippling of gowns and banners in the wind, the flickering of the flaming torches, for example, and, at the height of his ambition — though also his mental anguish — Macbeth sits enthroned on the highest platform with the shadows on the wall behind him of his crown held in his hands, together with shadow crosses thrown by the scaffolding supports.

It is at this height that we see Malcolm stand as King at the end of the play, to receive the salutations of his Lords, and it is to be the witches in their cavern far below that Macbeth's head is finally thrown.

DTG's *Macbeth* at East Point Gun Turrett. Photo: Gilbert Harrada

David Kemp in *A Child Growing Up*
Photo: Gilbert Harrada

Overdose of memories

A CHILD GROWING UP

By Robert Kimber

A Child Growing Up, compiled and performed by **David Kemp**. Brown's Mart, Darwin, NT. August '79.

The theme of a child growing up can be approached either from the viewpoint of the child or from the viewpoint of the adult observing the child.

As in Canadian-based David Kemp's recital, the memories may be amusing ("Matilda"), warm ("Timothy Winters"), and lyrical ("Cider With Rosie"). Memories can be both moving and interesting for listeners, an over-dose, however, can sweeten the edge of the palate rather too much at the expense of critical perception. This programme of poetry and prose about growing up suffers from such an over-dose.

Mr Kemp speaks with a massive voice suiting his commanding presence and uses it greatly to effect in telling the story of Oscar Wilde's "Selfish Giant" and in relating two passages from Dylan Thomas, one from "Quite Early One Morning" and the other from "The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Dog". But this virtue is a cause for a certain weakness in the overall presentation. There is insufficient throw away in the technique of delivery and certainly not enough humour and personal comment to enliven the speaker himself.

The child's point of view comes from one tone piece by Stuart Widdows, aged eleven, "The Dog with a Million Fleas". Placed at the closing of the first half, Mr Kemp acknowledges that this piece is effective as a story and a comment. The story proved, with "The Selfish Giant", to be the most moving passage of the evening, and with the Wilde classic left some real observations about how children behave in growing up, namely in reference to the balance of values in a child's mind, the struggle with adult concepts of materialistic possession and control, and the response to the place of innocent, undemanding care for other people that is possible in the vision of a child.

The convention of carrying papers is an intrusion. Theatre works as a meeting between the mind of the performer and that of the audience. Props can get in the way. In telling stories and presenting poetry the script can be well done without. It's surprising that Mr Kemp hangs onto his

THEATRE/QLD

State Rep./Don Batchelor

Neither good nor bad

DEATHTRAP

By Robert Kingham

Play by Ira Levin Queensland Theatre Company SGIO Theatre Boulton Opened 15 August 1979

Director John Kummel Designer Fiona Reilly Stage Manager Ellen Kennedy

Sydney Bruhl Alan Edwards Myra Bruhl Fay Kelton Clifford Anderson Tony Sheldon Helga ten Dorp Roberta Stephens Porter Milgrim Reginald Gillam

(Performed)

After a year of changing fortunes and box-office disappointments the QTC is clearly looking to its production of *Deathtrap* to turn the tide of events. The remaining two plays for 1979 - *The Dream* staged in a parkland setting complete with Mendelsohn and fireworks and *The Man Who Came To Dinner* complete with Frank Thring - indicate that the company means business in its efforts to attract the general public to its 1980 10th anniversary programme.

The change of tack is felt immediately upon entering the normally sterile SGIO Theatre foyer. The display spells pazazz and success. The programme says nothing about the play (what is there to say after all?), but says a lot about the people in it. We are invited to enter a lucky-dip competition before the play - the winner being drawn on stage after the play by the actors. Finally we are all sent home with a friendly and relaxed chat from the stage by Alan Edwards. Plainly it is all systems go on giving the audience a good time and making them feel "at home".

The production of *Deathtrap* is certainly homely. It is neither good nor bad which ensures that the audience has a good, safe time. As the play spirals even deeper into its own navel, taking the actors with it, the plasticity of it all leaves one with nothing but the plot structure to look at, which is all right if you are that way inclined. Two things mar the production in a significant way. The veneer covering the performances and production alike lacks the gloss finish one has come to expect from a commercial bonanza. Secondly, both play and production try so hard to outmanoeuvre *Sleuth* that the totality of the evening finishes up falling far short of its target.

I do appreciate QTC's reasoning in doing *Deathtrap*, and its need to finish the year with some hard-core commercial success. I also believe the sincerity and warmth of its out-reaching to the audience. It is a welcome and refeshing change and more convincing than what happens on the stage in this instance. My fear is that the success of this end-of-year "boulevard" policy may woo the company into becoming just that and foregoing its potential as the major, *subsidised* company in Queensland.

This is a company with the capacity for quality work and, frankly, it is capable of mounting a better *Deathtrap*. It alone has the resources sufficient to mount an uncompromising *Streetcar* and a pretty monumental *Hedda Gabler*. To date, QTC's artistic triumphs have not been matched at the box-office. With funding limitations impending, it is an easy matter to appreciate the anxieties.

It would be gratifying to see these two standards (artistic and financial) meet successfully. The QTC deserves such a harvest if only to convince the company that it may be better at doing *Streetcar Named Desire* than it is at *Deathtrap*. The 1980 programme will be an important indication of where QTC intends to take its audience.

Alan Edwards (Sidney) in the QTC's *Deathtrap*.

Powerful and adventurous

PEER GYNT

By Jeremy Ridgman

Peer Gynt by Henrik Ibsen. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane, Qld. Opened 24 August 1979.
Director: **Ron Finney**. Music: **Dave Watson**. Choreography: **Diane Bowman**. Costumes: **Anne Pryor** and **Jill Lincoln**. Young, Old and Strange Passenger: **Paul Friedman**. Old Peer: **Graham McKenzie**.
(Professional Production)

The advance publicity for Ron Finney's production of *Peer Gynt* may not have reached the extremes achieved by that for his *Lysistrata* (see *TA* Nov-Dec 1976) but it has been equally misleading. How many potential patrons have been put off by the prospect of Ibsen turned into a "rock spectacular"? No fewer than perhaps will have been encouraged to turn off after *Countdown* and make their way down to the funny grey building opposite the footie ground, but one does wonder. The publicity brochure certainly had one conjuring up pictures of gyrating transvestite trolls, wrapped in little more than a microphone lead, or perhaps the Bopping Boyge hitting us with the "Gjendin Rock."

Such misapprehensions were ill-founded. There is very little rock in this production (what music is selectively deployed is quite intricate in its melodies and almost jazz orientated in its rhythms) and the "spectacle" is muted and to the point. It is quite simply a powerful and adventurous rendering of a flawed masterpiece whose theatrical potential has always cried out for such strong directorial handling. The text has been sensibly and constructively cut to a fleeting three hours and though one would quibble with the exclusion of certain moments (the drowning of the ship's cook, I think, is essential in demystifying Peer's egotism) Ibsen is never betrayed.

Visually the production is stark and compelling. La Boite has been stripped back and is awash with grey and white, a canvass excitingly filled by Ian Perkins' aqueous lighting design. The sea is a constant point of reference and indeed a brief opening mime suggests that the entire play, not only the final act, may be the recollections of a drowning man. The temptation to pre-empt the surreal decadence of the desert scenes in the earlier acts is boldly eschewed: no slick humanoid trolls here but snuffling, misshapen uglies and a fairy-tale village community, dressed in clean whites and primary colours evoking a picture of child-like simplicity. It is to this world that Peer eventually returns to be claimed by a chuckling Button Moulder who might have stepped out of a painting by Richard Dadd.

Doug Anderson (Troll King) and Jill Lincoln (Woman in Green) in La Boite's *Peer Gynt*

Dave Watson's music is haunting and witty, upholding both the play's mysterious beauty and its satiric edge. There are moments of pure magic: from the unashamedly moving death of Aase to a terrifying asylum scene, hosted by a superbly frenetic Begriffenfeldt. Paul Friedman and Graham McKenzie playing the younger and older Peers may lack the vocal maturity to do justice to the longer monologues but both compensate with strong physical presence. The continuity between the two performances is uncanny and the return of Friedman as the Strange Passenger a masterpiece of dramatic resonance.

Ultimately however, it is the cast of twenty-eight, with one hundred roles between them and hardly a weak link in evidence, that gives the production its stature. Some of the most memorable images — an entire wedding party frozen while Peer's and Solveig's eyes meet or a ship pitching through the gloom — are the product of a disciplined physical orchestration. It is to Ron Finney's credit as a trainer of actors that he has welded from an enthusiastic but largely inexperienced cast a "spectacular" of operatic dimensions *and* poignant depth.

THEATRE/SA

By Susan Vile

Music, nostalgia but little depth in Adelaide

OH WHAT A LOVELY WARE, MATE!
PRECIOUS MOMENTS...
CRIOCOIOS

Oh What A Lovely War by Joan Littlewood and Theatre Workshop. State Theatre Company, Adelaide SA. Playhouse. Opened 10 August 1979.
Director: **Colin George**. Co-director: **Kevin Palmer**. Designer: **Yval Bartz**. Movement: **Michael Fuller**. Musical Director: **Robert Guy**.
Cast: **June Bronhill, Marilyn Slim, Bill Austin, Robin Browning, Leslie Dayman, Nick Enright, Richard Grubb, Edwin Hodgeman, Des James, Wayne Jarratt, Val Jarkowicz, Claude Linstead, Chris Mahoney, Patrick Mitchell, Diana Mouna, Tony Preble, Jacqs Phillips, Peter Schwarz, Tony Strathan**
(Professionals)
Precious Moments by Henry Salter. *The Day I Stood Still* by Terence Clarke. Drama Company, Darwin Technical College, Nelson Young Troupe at the Red Shed, Adelaide SA. Opened 16 August 1979.
Directed: **Henry Salter**. Designer: **Lisa Philip Hurbell**. Stage Manager: **Jill Bartlett**.
Cast: **Paula Cattai, Noel Purdon, Wendy Madigan, Pitri Dunn, Pat Kelly, Coppelia Glutenschnabel**
(Professionals)
Crocodiles by **Frank Ford**. Iron Duchess at the Balcony Theatre, Adelaide SA. Opened August 1979.
Director: **Frank Ford**. Designer: **Jonathan Smythies**.
Singers: **Joanna Talakis, Linda Dulne, Flaherty, Joe Graham Duckett**
(Students)

August in Adelaide rang with a smile and a song, lively bait to lure those desirable seat-filling bums from comfortable armchairs.

The State Theatre Company went all the way musically with their own adaptation of Joan Littlewood's coup de theatre, *Oh What A Lovely War*, **Mate!** One delight of this Theatre Workshop piece is that any production is half-way to success before ever it starts. Filled as it is with songs from the Great War, it exploits the original power of the music to encourage and unite (once the soldiers, now the audience). Today it has the added popular dimension of nostalgia. Join to all that a live orchestra and the promise of Miss June Bronhill, and, as the overture draws to a close, the already softly humming audience is primed for enjoyment.

Enjoyment was the emphasis of the production, enjoyment in the form of laughter and song. A balancing poignancy was largely missing. As one audience member put it, "It wasn't at all depressing." This was a pity. Except for Christmas Day in No-man's-Land, a scene which worked through natural simplicity, there was little to move one. The script was partly to blame: its pioneering documentary cum musical-hall form is now familiar to us and the attempt to find a thousand ways for man to die on stage has to compete not only with film and television but also with other stage deaths.

Nevertheless, responsibility for tone lies with the director. And the accent was on enjoyment. The actors glowed with it. Ensemble work was good, no time was lost between scenes, smiles were genuine, no one was out of step. But sheer enjoyment is not enough. Too many of the performers lacked definition, that sharp edge to body and voice that makes for the old-fashioned concept of "stage presence". Old-fashioned it may be, but it marks the difference between an actor that you want to go on looking at, and one that you become used to.

Exceptions prove the rule. June Bronhill exudes professionalism and a kind of sensuous well-being as she sings. As a pert schoolteacher, she was also able to display her ability to make audience contact through timing and comic understatement. I'm not sure, though, if she was quite right for "I'll make a man of you". Robert Grubb was a fine light tenor and a deliciously incoherent drill sergeant. Jacqs Phillips stood out in both solo and chorus work.

Alex Bartz' set was pleasingly simple, the costumes less so. The pierrots looked awkward in easily creased and inflexible satin, while Miss Bronhill suffered sadly in all but her Mae West outfit.

June Bronhill in the STC's *What A Lovely War, Mate!* Photo: David Wilson

Still, the smiles persisted. But for those of the audience who left content, how much of that contentment, I wonder, derived from the power of nostalgic song!

Troupe's smile and song were quite different. Here again music drew on the strength of nostalgia, but this time as atmospheric background, not as an intricate part of the script. Nevertheless, Coppelia Glutenschnabel's piano medley of themes from the past provided a continuity that uneven acting and direction lacked.

Henry Salter presented four of Yavin's *Precious Moments*. The plays are short, tightly written comments on family life, strongly reminiscent of Albee's *American*

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A rare night's entertainment

TONIGHT: LOLA BLAU

By Margaret McClusky

Tonight, Lola Blau by Georg Kreisler. English text by Dan White. National Theatre, Melbourne. Opened Adelaide 27 July 1979, touring Australia to 17 November 1979.
Director: **Ted Robinson**. Designer: **Silvia Jansons**. Musical Director: **Dale Kingland**. Lighting: **Alan Knox**.
Lola Blau: **Robyn Archer**.
(Performance seen)

Archer's praises have been sounded long and loud enough for me not to add my voice to the cacophony. And comparisons are odious. But with lightening of heart I whisper to myself Livermore, Pial, Minelli — for what can I compare Archer to? She has the grace and presence of a Livermore, the winsomeness of a sturdy-robust Pial, the gaiety of a Minelli. And just as I'm thinking she's a dead ringer for Sally Bowles, she up and does a wonderful stick-it-up your-Minelli impersonation for her demanding "Herr Director".

Archer has long since been labeled "feminist" — tsk tsk those "Menstruation Blues" — and misanthropic — and why not? But this performance will add another "Proselyte". *Lola Blau* throbs with jewishness, but not kitsch or shmultz, more the Bronx pessimism in prosperity, wryness in failure brand.

Archer Blau approaches her audience across the vast desert of the stage, an ingenue who receives a last minute phone call from boyfriend Leo whom she refuses to join because of her singing engagement. She goes on, mime-white face, frenzied red hair, slinky chemise, and slick tights, and takes us from Vienna to Hollywood and back.

She woos with the loneliness of the stage but without the sentiment of the back stage blues. Archer Blau is a dogged performer, and while the plight of the woman alone in the dead dream of the stage is never far from her lips, she sets aside the starry-eyed dreams of a million hopefuls and presents the dedication of a woman who endures the sleaze of suitcase living and damp underwear strung across a bed-sit with only the radio and telephone as defence against the tyranny of the stage.

But for the scaffolding, a barrage of lights, three screens and the odd table and chair, the stage is bare. Her musical accompaniment is one piano, which is all the powerful, varied, precise Archer voice requires.

If there is a sour note hit in the show, it is the flickering slides of the costume — change hiatus. Hitler rallying, jews hanged, Dachau starved, assume a didacticism which add politics rather than period to *Lola Blau*. But all is forgiven by the audience — though not by Blau when she bounces back on stage.

Archer's achievement is impressive. For the cynics, it is propaganda, jewish ("Mrs Schmidt"), feminist ("Herr Direktor"), misanthropic ("Never Tell Him The Truth") for the aesthetes, it is skilled, gifted, accomplished. For the rest of us it is a rare night's entertainment. What more do you want?

Robyn Archer as Lola Blau. Photo: Robert McFarlane

Could be funnier

THE RIVALS

By Garrie Hutchinson

The Rivals by Richard Sheridan. Melbourne Theatre Company, Athenaeum Theatre, Melbourne. Venue: Opened August 9, 1979.
Director: **Peter James**. Designer: **Anne Fraser**.
Sir Anthony Absolute: **Edward Hepple**. Lydia Languish: **John Stanton**. Faulkland: **David Downer**. Acres: **Malcolm Keith**. Sir Lucius O'Trigger: **Anthony Hawkins**. Fag: **Cory Hay**. David: **James Shaw**. Thomas: **Bruce Kerr**. Mrs Malaprop: **June Jago**. Lydia Languish: **Sandy Gore**. Julia: **Elizabeth Alexander**. Lucy: **Vivien Davies**. Servants: **Warwick Comber**.
[illegible]

The Rivals is the play of a 24 year old who confidently thought that because he was short of a quid, turning out a play might turn in a profit. How right he was. But what makes *The Rivals* work is not its creaky structure, nor any academic arguments about its place in the history of English comedy, nor even the opportunities it gives actors, but its enthusiasm, its positively naive glorying in the varieties of English languages.

A character like Mrs Malaprop (delightfully played by June Jago in this production) could only be imagined by a person who was prepared to give eccentricity its head, confident he'd be funny enough to get away with it. Sheridan was plainly so full of ideas about language and English oddities that he would certainly have needed the full 5 hours he took in the original version.

Daffy Mrs Malaprop is the ancestress of many great comic ladies, from Edna Everage to Mary Tyler Moore. She is perhaps the pineapple of linguistic success, bending words to mean precisely what she thinks they mean as long as you know what she meant to say. What an advantage to be gently humorous and understood as well. Even the luscious Lydia Languish might forgive being locked up with improving books by her harridan aunt if she stopped to listen.

Lydia is another of the enthusiastically sketched characters that make the play work. Her romantic disposition and dizzy flights of fancy are given a full performance by Sandy Gore, necessary to make the jokes work, to cover over the drippingly sentimental artifice of the plot.

These two women in this production are the hub of the play. With the exception of Malcolm Keith's rustic Acres and Edward Hepple's cantankerous Sir Anthony Absolute, most of the other actors seem unsure as to how funny they should try to be. Some of the minor parts are played for laughs, but John Stanton's Captain Absolute and David Downer's Faulkland seem to be in another play. They are in something much more droll and expressive. The downcast eyes, the sad sack faces, the slumped or raised shoulder, the deliberateness, don't really have a place in a play that is most funny at its most farcical.

We are not out to learn anything from this comedy, merely to be diverted. The audience may like its laughs under the guise of art but it's up to the artists to make it funny. We do not care all that much about how *The Rivals* was done, only that it *has* been done in the spirit in which it was written. That is, to repeat, to make a quid making people laugh. A most honorable desire.

Peter James' production falls down most of all in a curiously dispirited final scene, the duel and reconciliations. This is played as if all the laughing were over, and that merely because the play has 20 more pages they have to be played out. Even Malcolm Keith's bumpkin comedy cannot redeem a sad and dreary finale. Where there might be flash and vigour and self-conscious (that is, awake) playing of what even Sheridan would acknowledge as an artificial conclusion, we have plodding, down at heel, lets get it over with. A little cutting, and a little additional singing or whipcracking or wig tossing might send the audience away laughing, instead of puzzling over why 2½ hours of England's finest wit only had half an hour's humour.

June Jago, Sandy Gore and Vivien Davies in MTC's *The Rivals*

Transatlantic transactionals

SEXUAL PERVERSITY IN CHICAGO

NO MAN'S LAND

By Suzanne Spunner

No Man's Land by Harold Pinter. Hoopla at the Playbox Downstairs, Melbourne Vic. Opened 31 August 1979
Director **Morris Copland** Designer **Alex Berrie** Music **Barry Conyngham**
Hirst **Henry Cuthbertson** Spooner **Charles Tingwell** Foster **William Zappa** Briggs **Stewart Laidlaw**
(Professional)

Sexual Perversity in Chicago by Harold Mamet. Hoopla upstairs at The Playbox, Melbourne Vic. Opened 17 August 1979
Directors **Graeme Blundell** and **Nano Nagle** Designer **Peter Corrigan**. Sound designer **Red Symons** Slides **Rennie Ellis**
Dan Shapiro **John O'May** Bernard Litko **Graeme Blundell**
Deborah Seidman **Evelyn Krape** Joan Webber **Nancy Black**
(Professional)

Reviewing two plays in tandem rarely provides as many fruitful contrasts and similarities as a consideration of Hoopla's latest fare *No Man's Land* and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*. Harold Pinter and David Mamet are separated by a lot more than the dark and brooding Atlantic. Pinter is now part of established English theatre, while David Mamet in relation to the American theatre is beginning to occupy the bright new boy reputation that Pinter hatched in more than ten years ago.

No Man's Land was written in 1976 and originally performed with those now aging monuments to English theatre, Ralph Richardson and John Gielgud in the leading roles and *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* was written at about the same time. *No Man's Land* is decidedly an old man's play and *Sexual Perversity* clearly the work of a young man, similarly the plays divide on class lines. *No Man's Land* is set in a comfortable Hampstead amongst men who perhaps knew each other at Oxford while *Sexual Perversity* is set in the hometown of *Playboy* Magazine amongst people who spend their days slogging away at "professional" jobs and their nights frequenting singles bars.

Pinter's people are articulate and genteel and can draw on an intellectual Audenesque artiness in their allusive convoluted conversations while Mamet's characters are glib and snappy in their repartee but their range of reference is limited to media rash and West Coast transactional twaddle. Yet both Pinter and Mamet are acute observers of language codes and their attendant modes of feeling and whether the code is elaborated to the point of affectation as it is in Pinter or restricted to the point of being crippled as it is in Mamet the point remains the same there is no significant communication language and ultimately moral responsibility for the self or the other is bankrupt.

Whilst the ostensible subject of *Sexual Perversity* is the sexual mores of our times and the possibilities for sexual connection its explicit theme it also explores the other possibilities for relationships which could arise from these essentially teleological acts. Pinter on the other hand has a much freer and more open theme the meeting of the past with the present, confronting old age with the fiery memories of youth and sexual rivalries long since played out. For Mamet's characters everything is explicit and up front for Pinter's gentlemen and their ambiguous factotum everything is implicit, veiled in innuendo, surmise and perhaps even wilful lies if not selective memory and masking dotage.

Graeme Blundell (Bernard Litko) and John O'May (Dan Shapiro) in Hoopla's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*

The construction and time sequence mirrors this difference in concern. *No Man's Land* which begins one evening and concludes the next morning, time flows fluidly and naturalistically with a minimal sense of the writer's intervention, whereas in *Sexual Perversity* the play covers a period of some nine weeks one summer with an exhausting thirty four scenes of almost randomly selected and tightly cropped snapshots in which Mamet pointedly juxtaposes one conversation against another. The past as a topic and metaphor is always present in *No Man's Land*, every moment in the present has been qualified if not corrupted by the past and its remembrance.

In *No Man's Land* the actors and designer were given the freedom to steep themselves in the play and rely on this continuity, whereas in *Sexual Perversity* the design choices which were made compounded (presumably intentionally) the jaggedness of the script and posed ultimately even greater problems for the actors in establishing and developing the characters. Had designer Peter Corrigan chosen a less determining and simpler device than the snapping toothed screen which edited each frame of the action and the four actors been on stage at all times, a more cohesive less stuck-together work could have emerged.

As it was the design over determined to meaning and fell victim to portraying fragmentation by being itself fragmented it also allowed the actors to skate deftly over the surface and rarely forced them to come to terms with the undersides of their roles. Only Nancy Black as the bitter Primary School teacher Joan managed to get past the superficiality and sickness and suggest a past and a future.

Sexual Perversity is not a satisfying play it feels very much like a sketch toward something which almost to the end I felt might still be put forward and there is a cheap facility in the way many of its lightning effects are achieved. It lets everybody writer, actors audience and society — off far too lightly. In the end while the experience has been enervating and depressing and to that extent confronting there is finally a hollow, so-what quality — is that all there is?

Pinter on the other hand does not let us off lightly what he shows is more disturbing because he leaves us with questions to which he offers many possible answers and no single simple conclusion but he has also reminded us that only be being aware of the riddled complexity of people's lives will we ever ask any question of our own. Pinter has made us care and think, Mamet has ensured that we can't care and given us very little to think about beyond a bald reactiveness.

THEATRE/WA

State Rep./Joan Ambrose

A rich mix of ingredients

THE MAN FROM MUCKINUPIN

By Margot Luke

The Man from Muckinupin by **Dorothy Hewett**. Music by **Jim Cotter**. The National Theatre Company. Playhouse, Perth. World Premiere 31 August 1979.
Director **Stephen Barry**. Designer **Tony Tripp**. Choreography **Jenny McNae**. Lighting **Duncan Dill**. Music Director **Jim Cotter**.
Hummy Hummer **Rosemary Barr**. Clarry Hummer **Margaret Ford**. Eek and Zeek Perkins **Maurie Ogden**. Edie Perkins **Sally Sander**. Dolly and Lily Perkins **Noni Hazlehurst**. Jack and Harry Tuesday **Richard Tulloch**. Cecil Brunner **Max Montebello**. and The Flasher **Bill Kerr**. Widow Tuesday **Margaret Ford**. Mercy Montebello **Jenny McNae**.
(Pictures overleaf)

The Man from Muckinupin bears the stamp of all Dorothy Hewett's work: it's a rich mix of ingredients few playwrights dare to stir together with such abandon. There's a touch of *Under Milkwood* in the poetic grotesquery of the Muckinupin citizens, yet there's also a flavour of fifties musical, to soften the outlines and make this West Australian wheatbelt town more easily acceptable to the faint-hearted than earlier works. It is, after all, a contribution to the 150th Birthday which the State is so relentlessly celebrating. Yet, Hewett be praised, she doesn't get fulsome and even while on her best behaviour, laces the mixture with joyous irreverence.

The play is less overtly poetic than previous works: linguistically it does not often amaze. In this instance the poetic quality is introduced in the simplicity of the folksong-like ballads. At the same time, the searing bitter blackness of earlier plays is here submerged into the shadowy portraiture of the "night people" whilst the freedom to use crude language is never indulged in for the hell of it, but rigorously applied for the purpose of characterisation.

There isn't a *man* from Muckinupin as such — it's the *people* of Muckinupin who are the heart of the play. The small town characters crowd the stage and the imagination. They are schematically divided into daytime respectable citizens and their nocturnal doppelgangers, displaying a wealth of dreams, memories, frustrations, aspirations and guilt.

At the centre is the storekeeper's daughter, pretty Polly Perkins, just old enough in 1912 (when the play begins) to put up her hair. She has a half-aboriginal

Bill Kerr, Maurie Ogden, Rosemary Barr, Sally Sander, with Noni Hazelhurst and Richard Tulloch in the National's *Man From Muckinupin*

half-sister, Lily, who lives by the creek-bed. Both are played by Noni Hazlehurst, who is quite simply magnificent. Sugar-sweet as the one, rough yet appealing as the other, she is required to age and develop both characters, continually alternating between them. She sustains both roles throughout, even extending it to her singing style. Her voice has exactly the right quality for the part — combining the purity of the traditional folk-singer with the energy needed for contemporary work. This range is best heard in the wistful "Sad Wedding Song" in the character of Polly, preceded by "Touch of the Tar's Song", as Lily — one of them gently lyrical, the other part protest, part primitive — a remarkable feat.

Polly is wooed by jolly Jack Tuesday (Richard Tulloch), a personable lad who helps in the store but has a gift as an entertainer. He also has a no-good twin-brother in Fremantle gaol. Both of them go off to the war in 1914 and duly come back. Both of them are involved with the half-caste Lily.

Polly's other suitor is Cecil Brunner (the choice of names is a delight in itself), a dapper though seedy, corseted and toupeed travelling salesman, played with relish by Bill Kerr. (His night-time counterpart is, of course, The Flasher.)

The night-time characters, although shadowy, are an interesting lot. Rosemary Barr has the plum role of Miss Clemmy Hummer, who exists in both worlds, and who lives with her memories of glamour and success on the high wire in far-off marvellous Melbourne, till a fall left her crippled. Now, she makes nocturnal visits to the rough end of town, hobbling along with the aid of a crutch, to observe the cavortings of Zeek Perkins, water diviner and astronomer, Flasher, the madman, and Lily, known as Touch of the Tar, the only remaining member of an aboriginal tribe that has been wiped out by the respectable people of Muckinupin.

Eek Perkins (storekeeper and father of Polly and Lily), played with urbane charm by Maurie Ogden, and his wife, Edie (Sally Sander) are the kind of deadly respectable couple that in more characteristic Hewett vein would have been pilloried. Here, despite the shocking revelation that they bear the responsibility for the black massacre, they emerge as rather a dull couple, and giving Edie a Lady Macbeth scene to demonstrate her suppressed guilt does not solve the problem. Massacres and cosy musical comedy happy endings, however tongue-in-cheek, can't coalesce.

However, to enliven the world of the Muckinupin Establishment, Max and Mercy Montebello, a colourful pair of travelling players, are introduced. Their rendering of the strangling scene from *Otheloo* is a gem. In fact, the diversions — mainly musical — are skilfully integrated to round out and amplify the plot, be it the rousing patriotic numbers, complete with lagerphone, when Jack Tuesday goes off to war, or the spirited variety number "An 'Am an Egg and an Onion" to show his potential in show-business. There are also some brilliant visual jokes: the appearance of a hunyip-like creature among the night-revellers, a group of animated haystacks dancing, a straw soldier and his dog on top of the war-memorial.

The music, too, is unobtrusively integrated into the text, rather than making its own statement. Whilst pleasing, it is clearly "in the style of" whichever genre it mimics.

Tony Tripp's set is masterly. A monochromatic study in ochre-toned wood, stylised gum-trees blending into

(Continued over page)

clouds frame the stage, and the silhouette of lurching verandah posts introduces a gothic touch to the night-scenes, whilst in daytime imaginative lighting and backdrop turn the scene into a sun-parched town west of the rabbitproof fence.

The eight members of the cast play fourteen roles but somehow create the impression of a whole town on stage. Bill Kerr who creates three distinct characters ranging from the spruce Cecil Brunner to the scruffy but agile Flasher, has his finest moments as the wildly italienate Othello-playing Max Montebello. So far not mentioned is Margaret Ford's serene Clarry alternating with the tough old crow, the Widow Tuesday, and Jenny McNae who makes her Mercy Montebello a gently sent-up femme fatale, one could not help wishing for more than one single musical number allotted to her.

The play has been well received on its home ground, where this playwright is regarded as dangerously controversial, and one hopes it will pave the way to greater appreciation and acceptance of the author's tougher and more demanding plays.

Most successful so far

EASTER

By Margot Luke

Easter by August Strindberg (adapted by **Colin McColl**). The Hole in the Wall theatre, Perth. Opened 9 August 1979.
Director: **Colin McColl**. Designer: **Richard Hartley**. Stage Manager: **Jane Parkinson**. Sound Designer: **Dave Edwards**. Lighting: **Roger Selleck**.
Mrs Heyst: **Elizabeth Caracob**. Elis: **Frank Johnson**. Eleanora: **Vivienne Plumb**. Kristina: **Sarah Smith**. Benjamin: **Ashley Jones**. Lindkvist: **Dennis Schulz**.
(Professional)

To reassure intending patrons that this Strindberg play won't hurt at all, *Easter* is advertised as his most optimistic one. It probably is, but the rather hasty happy ending (possibly due to cuts made to the original) spoils it. The gloomy Swede is better on the downbeat. The first act is tremendous and the second a bit of a let-down. Frantically thematic, it links the fortunes of an ill-fated family with the pattern of the Easter week-end, from the bleak despair of Good Friday eve, to the joyous hope of resurrection on Easter Sunday. The programmatic approach often appears too relentless, but despite the rigid structure some marvellous theatre emerges.

Richard Hartley's set is enormously effective. The background is given over to

Noel Purdon in Troupe's *Precious Moments*. Photo: Penny Ramsay.

large diaphanous screens suggested windows looking out onto a cold, possibly snowy northern town. This emphasises the sense of isolation felt by the characters, clinging for reassurance to the furniture that seems to symbolise status and security. The background is further enriched by evocative sound effects, some of which are not immediately understood but gradually reveal their significance.

The doom-laden atmosphere is explained early: each of the characters is oppressed by the burden of a family scandal: the absent father's financial ruin and embezzlement. The mother is embittered, the son desperately trying to atone for the father's guilt; the sister driven into insanity; and various fringe characters, seen and unseen, are similarly affected.

There are good performances by Elizabeth Caracob as the rigid and frightened mother and Sarah Smith as the self-effacing fiancee, but the outstanding performance of the evening comes from Vivienne Plumb as the daughter: gently and poetically insane. She has the most imaginative and luminous lines, of course, but she does them more than justice. Visually it is a stroke of genius to have her crop her hair (escapee from a nineteenth century lunatic asylum) which makes her look like Dreyer's Joan of Arc and immediately establishes the dual reference of saint and madwoman.

Ashley Jones does well with the schoolboy part, being gentle without being mawkish, and Dennis Schulz as Lindkvist, "the giant from Skin Flint Mountain", gives the character a sort of mythic miniature Orson Welles touch that goes well with the benevolently bullying authority-figure he represents.

Frank Johnson, as the central character, tends to overplay the moments of climactic emotions but does well in the more introspective and sardonic passages.

In terms of total production this is the most successful and integrated work we have so far seen from director Colin McColl at this theatre.

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Dreams and *The Sandboy*, but with a grotesqueness of image which pitches in and out of the absurd with sickening abruptness. They require a deft, surrealistic touch from director and dexterity from actors.

We gained a sense of surrealism from two-dimensional props, but this was not enough. The actors were either misguidedly naturalistic or uncontrolled to the point of being shamefully distracted by the audience. Only Wendy Madigan was able to effect the sharpness and precision necessitated by rapid changes of mood, while remaining sufficiently relaxed to think her way through a long and difficult monologue. She — and the piano — averted an evening of embarrassment.

Another lady saved the night for Icon Theatre Company. Joanna Talikis faced with a script that wavered between dated cliche and didactic argument, risked the dangerous way out — that of hamming it up and defying the audience to miss a

Frank Johnson (Elis) and Elizabeth Caracob (Mrs Heyst) in the Hole's *Easter*.

laugh — and with bravura she succeeded. As a Greek actress-turned-maid she swayed, stamped, screamed, wheedled, grimaced and pouted by turns.

The other actors fared less well, but then their own stereotypes — plain history teacher and ocker businessman — had even less potential. They were, after all, playing the Australian "criocolos" (a Greek word meaning "cold arse") who could only be kindled by the Greek fire of passion.

There were earnest discussions about politics, history, materialism, emotionalism, nationalism — you name it, they discussed it. There were even lengthy excerpts from Antigone and Medea. Then back to the reason versus passion conflict again. Finally, I couldn't help thinking that, if that's what he really wanted to say, director/playwright Frank Ford would have been better off simply directing a Greek classical play.

INTERNATIONAL

Shakespeare and Gin Game - all illuminating entertainment

By Irving Wardle

Twelve years ago following a dispute over the casting and opening date of his production of *As You Like It*, John Dexter withdrew from the show and turned his back on the National Theatre and on England, since when his career has centered on New York. He has been much missed, and there is something very satisfying in his present return to the N.T. with the play that occasioned his resignation.

In 1967 *As You Like It* (finally directed by Clifford Williams) was an all-male version heavily influenced by Jan Kott's essay on "Shakespeare's Bitter Arcadia". After a decade of brooding over his dream project, Dexter has a good deal more to offer than an exhibition of sexual *trompe l'oeuil*, though the production's theme remains that of transformation. But not only the boys and girls are transformed: the whole comedy emerges as a seasonal rite, embracing literary pastoral within a robust framework of folk ritual, and running from mid-winter to a May Day finale. Orlando first appears crowned with corn-stalks as king of the reapers assaulting his fashion-plate brother in view of a crowd of farm workers, and when the action shifts to Arden the peasants are still hard at it, building wattle fences, tending their livestock, weaving festive garlands in a stubborn pattern of survival that reflects ironically on the various leisured groups who have strayed into their midst.

There is a stark opening contrast between Duke Frederick's court where people can hardly move for outsize farthingales and ruffs, and the forest where the painted mannikins turn into real people. But the forest is not the golden world: it is the real countryside, and a place of self-discovery where the distinction persists between those who belong to the earth and those who are playing pastoral games. And the task of adjusting themselves, for once, to an actual environment produces startling changes in all the principal characters. Jaques, for instance, moves from the periphery to dead centre of the action. When he accuses the exiled Duke of usurping authority over the forest creatures, this comes over as literal truth, not moody philosophising. And as Michael Bryant plays him, Jaques becomes not only intelligent, but also sympathetic. His melancholy, as he says, is "a melancholy of mine own" which has left him with an unsoured capacity for affection and mischief.

Another transformation is that of John Normington's Touchstone, first seen as a highly-painted professional entertainer who fits perfectly into the stiff-necked court and makes a deliberate point of not getting laughs with his terrible jokes. Once in the forest, the cap and bells come off, and we are left with a dour-middle-aged man for whom it is an inexpressible relief to switch off the gags and sit gossiping in the sun with a shepherd. Most startling of all is the Orlando of Simon Callow who achieves the seemingly impossible task of converting this usually insipid juvenile into Rosalind's equal. Given Sarah Kestelman's emotional agility and attack in that fool-proof role, the task is even harder than usual: but there is never any question of who has the whip-hand, and some of Rosalind's virtuoso turns now emerge as Scheherazade-like improvisations to save herself from abandonment or rape.

All these threads of personal growth are woven into the pattern of seasonal renewal, which is inscribed, change by change, on the naked timbers of Hayden Griffin's set — a white stage-cloth for the winter scenes, followed by a carpet of green and a blossoming May tree. The turning points are marked by the songs (pastiche Dowland settings by Harrison Birtwistle) which reach their climax in "What Shall He Have Who Killed the Deer?" which is played as an elaborate folk ritual straight out of *The Golden Bough*, with bleeding entrails festooning the tree and the transformation of the peasantry into antlered celebrants of a fertility cult, ringing the stage in elemental contrast to the pretty pastoral group in the centre. It is an act of invocation, and when the god does descend it is from among the horned men that Hymen speaks: after which, Rosalind can hardly get through her epilogue before taking flight from a company intent on a gang-bang. The show has aroused the usual English resistance to "director's theatre" but I can only record it as the most illuminating version of the play I have yet seen.

After the successful song-book compilations from Noel Coward, Sondheim, and Cole Porter, it was only a matter of time before someone came up with an original addition to the genre. *Songbook* (Globe) is therefore no surprise: what is surprising is that the authors of this deft musical five-hander are British.

Not much has been heard of Monty Norman and Julian More since the 1950s, when they gave us *Irma la Douce* and *Expresso Bongo*, but they have made a stunning come-back in this account of the life and work of Moony Shapiro: Liverpool-Irish orphan of American nationality whose songs accommodate every change in fashion from the Ziegfeld Follies to the Beatles and who finally expired trying to discover the hidden black notes between E and F.

Moony is a life-long failure, and most of the show's excellent jokes are designed to rub this in, but no audience would accept the joke if that meant sitting through an evening of dreadful songs. And the authors' main technical triumph is to have it both ways, at once convincing you that there never was such an irreclaimable hack as the ever-beaming David Healy, while at the same time crediting him with a gift for such brilliant pastiche that many of the songs exist in their own right.

Of these, I would nominate "April in

INTERN

Sara Kestelmain (Rosalind) and John Normington (Touchstone) in the National Theatre production of *As You Like It*

Winsansin" which outdoes forties Sinatra, "Mr Destiny You Done Us Wrong" which records Moony's views on the Depression, and "You're a Nazi Party pooper, Jesse Owens" dating from the hero's experience of the 1936 German Olympics where he marries into the English aristocracy with the aid of a thinly disguised Mitford Left-winger

Jonathan Lynn's production owes much of its impact to the immensely accomplished, quick-change performances of Moony's four companions, among whom, if anyone has to be singled out, it must be Anton Rogers who acts both as a twitchily casual compere, and a gallery of cameo parts – saturnine *chansonnier*, bullying agent, incompetent punk drummer, all projected with the sharp edge of a steel engraving

The obvious reason for seeing D L Coburn's *The Gin Game* (Lyric) is to catch what may be the last London appearance of Jessica Tandy and Hume Cronyn America's most eminent husband-and-wife team since the Lunts Never having seen either of them before, I found their duet a masterly piece of naturalistic acting at its most artful Whether or not the play was written to show them off, it is much above the usual run of commercial two-handers A sex-battle on the brink of the grave for two misfits in an old folk's home, it uses Fonsia and Weller's addiction to cards (she always wins to his mounting fury) as an all-too-accurate senile substitute for the bedroom, and shows the unforgiving passions of the prime of life extending with undiminished bitterness to the end For once, a commerical American play that tells no lies about love

Avignon Festival

By Irving Wardle

As the stronghold of the schismatic Popes, Avignon was a natural choice for Jean Vilar and his decentralist supporters who launched the summer drama festival there in 1946 as the first great blow against the cultural domination of Paris In previous years, the centre of the event has always been the stupendous fourteenth-century courtyard of the Palais des Papes, the very heart of French *theatre populaire*, but this year the centre shifted to a secluded cloister in a maze of side streets for the long-awaited unveiling of Peter Brook's *Conference of the Birds*

Brook's *Conference of the Birds* at the Avignon Festival Photo AIGLES

Based on a twelfth-century Sufi allegory by Farid Uddin Attar, the show dates back to Brook's 1971 trip to Iran, and his subsequent 8,500 mile African tour which reached its climax with an improvisation of Attar's fable at the holy Yoruba city of Ife The Persian masterpiece was an apt subject for a troupe of improvisors heading off into the unknown, as it tells the story of a tribe of birds who undertake a perilous journey across seven valleys in search of their king, finally completing their quest of return to their starting point, the message being that without the journey you never understand that you need not have taken it

The Avignon version is no improvisation, but a thoroughly scripted and highly drilled end-product which will shortly be making the international rounds It is no more successful than Brook's earlier shows with the Centre International de Creations Theatrales in developing a universal theatre language the story has to be understood in detail You need to follow the dialectic of fable and counter-fable, and to set the Islamic opulence of the text against the

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austere invention of the staging

Here is an Arabian labyrinth of superb princesses, desert anchorites, dervishes, exotic landscapes, monumental palaces all rendered on a bare strip of ground with the aid of a few bamboo canes and small hand-masks And the brilliance of the stage vocabulary only strikes home when you know what it represents effects like the entrance of the hulking Andreas Katsulas in the improbable role of a peacock, conveying the bird's vanity with two flourishes of a fan, or the birds' dismay on finding themselves barred from the King's palace, whose massive doorway consists of three slender canes

Throughout the company, the bird pantomime is precisely matched to each species, but like everythingelse in the show it is refined to the minimum gesture needed to evoke a heron, a hoopoe, a sparrow, and in a flash they can abandon it and transform the scene into one of the innumerable illustrative parables that impel the birds on their pilgrimage

At one of the daily festival discussions, a French critic got up to announce that *La Conference des Oiseaux* was about "l'amour". No, another protested, it was about "la mort" To which I would add the proverb "Never trust the teller, trust the tale" for this is what Brook has done, and created a piece of narrative theatre full of memory-haunting images into which you can read manifold themes Watching it is like watching patterns in a fire.

And so, reluctantly to the Palais des Papes and the return to the West of the long-victimised Czech director Otomar Krejca with *Waiting for Godot* and Musset's *Lorenzaccio* *Godot*, the better show of the two, had a resplendent cast including Georges Wilson (Vladamir) and Michel Bouquet (Pozzo) not to mention the comedian Rufus as Estragon Impressive as these names are, they formed a precarious ensemble (particularly in the central duet between Wilson's nuanced character acting and Rufus's stand-up comic attack) And even in comparison with Beckett's own Spartan production for the Schiller Theatre, Krejca's version was as desolate as a desert horizon

Lorenzaccio, unfortunately for Krejca, has a long history at Avignon, this being one of the supreme products of the Vilar-Garard Philipe partnership Krejca too, directed a marvellous version of the play which I saw in Prague ten years ago, using the Medici tyrant's subordination to Rome as a direct parallel with Czechoslovakia after the Soviet invasion

That was explosive in 1969, and heroic in the prevailing circumstances (not long afterwards Krejca was hounded out of Prague by the Czech *apparatchiki*). Revived ten years later on the other side of the Soviet divide the life had gone out of it. For, substantially, this is the same production all over again. The main alteration is in the setting in Prague a Kafkaesque maze of mirrors by Josef Svoboda, in Avignon a brightly illuminated white platform with the whole company and props in view throughout the evening. But as for scenic invention, everything is as I remember it from before

What remains is a doughty piece of stage-management on the theme of simultaneity While the Medicis are revelling in their lives of privileged corruption, traders are suffering, political opponents being put to silence, insurrection simmering on the streets On Krejca's stage, all this is brought into single focus What is lacking this being the most Shakespearian of all French classics is characters The play is above all the study of an idealistic assassin who worms his way so completely into his victim's confidence that his original resolution almost evaporates It is a more interesting relationship than that of Hamlet and Claudius, and this aspect is wholly lacking from the line of the show and from Philippe Caubere's epileptically frenzied performance in the title role The French were cruel to boo, but I can see their point

At the Parc de Champfleury outside the town walls, Ariane Mnouchkine's Theatre du Soleil were installed with their current Paris show, *Mephisto* This typically elaborate and mercilessly prolonged event is based on Klaus Mann's novel of the same name This work is still banned in West Germany for its attack on the author's erstwhile brother-in-law and doyen of the postwar German theatre, Gustav Gruendgens a flamboyant left-winger in the 1930s who did a quick about-fact when the Nazis came to power and rose (thanks to Goering) to a commanding role in Third Reich drama

The novel is crowded with thinly disguised cultural names of the thirties Mann's sister Erika (daughter of Thomas Mann, who married Auden after her divorce from Gruendgens), Wedekind's daughter Pamela, Thomas Mann himself What Mnouchkine evidently most wished to take from it was a warning on the ever-present danger of fellow-travelling; though her production further elaborates the story by presenting characters of what she calls "triple origin those of the novel, those of history, and those of our own imagination"

Theatrically, the device that counts for most is her decision to interleave scenes of Hendrik Hofgen's (alias Gruendgens) opportunistic career with a satirical vaudeville staged at a replica of Erika Mann's cabaret, The Pepper Mill And the short sharp vaudevilles (including a Chaplinesque Hitler parody) come off splendidly Which does not save the whole piece from sprawling, and leaving you with the feeling that it is designed more for Theatre du Soleil devotees than for the public at large

WRITER'S VIEW

KENNETH ROSS

Kenneth Ross lives in Adelaide. He started writing for the stage in 1976. His first play *Don't Piddle Against The Wind, Mate*, was workshopped at the 1977 Playwrights' Conference, and in the same year went on to be produced by the Association of Community Theatres in The Space, Adelaide; in the NIDA/Jane Street season directed by John Tasker; and at the QTC. His second play, *'Breaker' Morant* was produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company last year, and his latest work *Sound of Silence* has just had a season at the Stage Company in Adelaide

"Theatre is the most conservative of the arts." At least that is what I read somewhere, and I can think of no good reason that disputes that, not now, not in these times. Perhaps it is because theatre is now so dominated by middle class conditioning that it has forgotten its origins. Or perhaps the competition of both film and television broke any real will to try and bring back a wider audience. Like the Church we have become steeped in tradition and thus we are paying the same price.

Of course the Church is not an unfair comparison, the origins of both having come from the same source and in an age of the anti-hero there is as little room for gods in a modern play as in the Church.

However, what I am wondering is has theatre (and by this I mean theatre that is more than just entertainment) reached the point of forgetting its origins, has it become so obsessed with style and form that the great strengths of theatre have been forgotten? Well not all the time it hasn't, but so often it seems to me it does forget its fundamental strengths, that it is over influenced and over obsessed with what is considered "correct", that style is considered before content, so for example a play which has plenty of style (by this I mean "trendy") will win hands down on critical appraisal over a play that has more content and interest to audiences.

Perhaps it's because we are still so self-conscious of our theatre that this should be so. Surely in an age where freedom of fashion abounds, the same freedom should be allowed of theatre. Isn't it time in this new world that we lost such inhibitions? Certainly in Europe or America they are not so obsessed with what is proper theatre. What works is good theatre and to hell with anything else. Theatre here seems to suffer from a colonial complex; perhaps the last true colonial mentality left in Australia.

Speaking now as a playwright I don't wish to be hampered with having to impose any style upon myself just because it's fashionable. Rather I see style as purely the vehicle to strengthen my play. Thus for a particular type of play I might choose naturalism because it can give me an authenticity which I feel is needed for that particular play. Another time because I am writing a completely different type of play I may use a surreal approach and shudder at the thought of using dialogue that resembles naturalism. In short I see style as my servant and not the other way round. What is of greater importance is that I attempt to reach for the origins of theatre as I cannot help but feel that in the end that is what makes a play stand or fall.

The Elizabethan theatre was free of pre-conceived ideas and thus it was free to discover what worked for it and what didn't.

Because we are such a young country it is all the more surprising that we do not feel free of European tradition (and by tradition I don't mean origins but rather that conditioning which is imposed after a great age has passed and not during) and allow ourselves to re-examine the values and strength that is theatre.

Theatre is a means of communication in the arts. If one accepts this then it stands to reason that communica-

tion with the audience is at its highest when it is saying something relevant to today's audience. This is not to say that dead authors can't be as relevant today as they were in their own time; sometimes they can be more so. It's just that I feel at times that a classic is often imposed on an audience simply because it is a classic and we should be more wary of the hill of fare that is dished out if we are to attract new audiences to theatre.

Something we seem to forget in modern theatre is that theatre is a celebration, as Pericles said of Greek theatre "a provision for the spirit". It is not just an intellectual experience but an emotional experience. Of course the intellectual has legitimate reason to fear emotion as our age has given him good enough reason to. Yet emotion is part of our being, it can make us more human as well as less human. Emotion and intellect combined equals the spirit of man and woman and spirit is the very essence of making theatre alive. Great ages and great theatre have usually gone hand in hand for this very reason. The creative energies are fired when these two faculties combine.

So what I am suggesting is there should not be so much cheap cynicism to emotion on stage. Theatre unlike celluloid is not a canned event and this therefore is its great strength. One is actually able to feel the flow from audiences to actor and back again simply because it is alive. It is, I feel sure, no accident that the great actors recognise that on stage they can create a sense of danger that a 'canned" event can't possibly do. Whether tragedy or comedy, emotion and danger is what theatre is about, let us not be too inhibited in letting it out.

Speaking personally the other great strength of theatre is that it is able to "raise-up issues" like no other art can because it has the ultimate communication tool, the spoken language. There is nowhere else in this day and age where the spoken word is less diluted or polluted than in the theatre. If a director accepts a playwright's work he accepts it for its contents. Certainly he may ask for cuts or re-writes but not with any desire to censure but rather to improve the work as an art form. Because of this freedom I can't help but feel that playwrights have almost an obligation to fulfill this criteria to its fullest and usually it doesn't make for dull theatre. The only time it does is when the propaganda becomes too obvious.

So what I am saying — if you are not lost by now — is that theatre is a celebration of the spirit and as Eric Bentley the drama critic wrote "However high in the air of the spirit the branches of drama may rise, the tree still has its primitive roots."

That we should re-discover the sense of adventure in theatre. That as a young, robust country we should draw on those qualities that are unequally ours and not be inhibited about thrusting them into our theatre. As a young country we should not fear putting more vigour into our theatre. Right now we could learn a lot from our film industry that has been free of such traditions.

Our films are not always good, sometimes they lack even discipline, but rarely do they lack a spirit or an identity. I can't help but feel we are ready to go looking for the same sort of thing in our theatres.

Terry Donovan ('Breaker'), John Stanton and Gary Day in the MTC production of *'Breaker' Morant*

TIE—Art or Manipulation

By Joe Woodward

To assume that all theatre is art is like assuming that all schooling is education and this certainly is not the case. Theoretically theatre and education are compatible concepts. However, the nature of both as defined by their particular institutions make for many difficulties. This is a shame because the synthesis of the two is remarkably simple.

La Boite's Early Childhood Drama Project (ECDP or, as teachers and children call us, the Drama Group) has had to find the processes of this synthesis so that effective creation and communication can take place - through play.

Adults and children need to play. They just have different motivations. For children play is the most dynamic part of their education process. By imitation and becoming somebody else there is potential for children to discover what it is like to be in different situations. Through play children grow in understanding of the social world, roles within the social world and its inherent relationships. This growth is basically education - not to be confused with "schooling".

Playing and acting out are limited however by models of behaviour experienced and the time and space available for play activity. Socially constructed sex roles are often a result of the conditioning power of play. One of the strongest negative social reinforcements comes from the television medium where children are constantly being presented with glib models over which they have no control other than that of being able to switch on or off. The coldness and lack of feeling evident in so much of the media's presentation affects children's play and general understandings of the social world.

Dorothy Cohen, an American educationist, focused on this point by saying:

> the model of human behaviour available to children is an unfeeling model of technical efficiency, a model that led to such ultimate denials of feeling as the bombardment of Vietnam, when human beings could focus intently on the efficiency of precision bombing from a high altitude and failed to see, hear, or feel the pain they inflicted on people and the earth. The separation of technical versatility from feeling and meaning is so pervasive in our society that even the youngest children are affected.

So what can theatre do?

Theatre is part of play or more precisely an extension of play. Instead of the one way communication of other media, theatre has the potential of *two-way* communication. This allows for a communion between actor and audience, which enables theatre to challenge itself and its audience by, as Jerzy Grotowski states "violating accepted stereotypes of vision, feeling and judgement — more jarring because it is imaged in the human organism's breath, body, and inner impulses".

The processes of play are being evoked when children's reactions and creations are genuinely incorporated into creating a theatre form. When this happens we tend to label this form of working as Theatre in Education. But I hesitate to use the term lightly because it is difficult to actually allow an audience to stop being an audience and become part of the actual creative process. We have rarely achieved this but when it has happened the theatre experience has been magic.

Within the ECDP two modes of working are currently being used. At one moment the actor represents a character to the children to define the rules of the game they are playing. In the next he is still in role but with the additional responsibility of incorporating the children into the game. This is virtually the same role as that of the leader director in improvisation sessions.

The task is further complicated because his function is not to present things as they really are or supposed to be. He is not out to preach, moralize, or state the facts as he or any other writer or director sees them. His task is to help expose the processes inherent in situations to draw out the nature of relationships within situations and hopefully share with the participants further exploration in an extended play situation.

ECDP attempts to extend children's play by providing new situations to be explored while guaranteeing their safety through the theatre medium. In discovering solutions to problems inherent in the situation they are challenging and sometimes confronted by problems for which no cliche solution is available.

In our new programme for pre-school and infant schools we are proposing to open up an awareness of energy as a positive process of continuous creation and destruction. What is most important is that children experience its physical process, recognise its manifestation, and take away with them some activity

related to their physical experience of this theatrical event for continued exploration and creation in their own play We are not so much interested in teaching about energy but rather aim to expose and share its process with children

To do this we will be using precise theatricality coupled with moments of play and sharing in the development of the art form rather than using the power relationship of actor to audience to make statements about good and bad We will be attempting to use a theatre statement to build moments of shared experience and creation

All of this work requires absolute trust in the worthiness of the art form and more generally in art itself What the ECDP strives for in theatre in education is the elevation of play and ideas into an art form where processes, relationships become evident and are able to be explored This requires at some point letting the participants in on the rules of the medium Without this there is no joint creation of art

It is a trap for the theatre in education team to divorce the two processes (ie theatre and education) There is always the temptation to separate educational objectives from the theatre process In this case theatre is used as a short cut manipulative power to achieve the unseen ends of adults The function of the ECDP is in fact the reverse ie to go to the heart of the creative process in theatre and in doing so discover its educative value for all involved

Our Drama Group with its range of commitments including theatre in education classroom drama lecturing and seminar work, together with a video and drama resource centre is confronted with a wide range of problems inherent in the creative processes

In many ways there has been considerable growth experienced in the five years of our existence ECDP is not a group of idealistic kids under a firm matriarchal hand, out to change the world Rather it is the professional artistic arm of La Boite Theatre's energy wheel and is comprised of ten people with varied theatrical and educational qualifications and experience It is our basic aim to enhance the development and practise of theatre and to use and promote the creative processes for the benefit of the community

Joe Woodward is the Project Co-Ordinator of La Boite Theatre's Early Childhood Drama Project.

Crew salute Captain Bell (Roger Rosser) after safely returning home from their adventurous voyage

OPERA

By David Gyger

Exciting month for AO and State Opera

August was really quite an exciting month for the Australian Opera, even though only one new production was unveiled at the Sydney Opera House

George Ogilvie's realisation of Verdi's final masterpiece, *Falstaff*, to generally superb designs by Kristian Fredrikson, was conducted with great relish and insight by Carlo Felice Cillario and featured an eminently fitting farewell performance by Ronald Maconaghie in the title role farewell because it marked the final appearances of Maconaghie as a member of the AO before taking up a teaching position at the Canberra School of Music

But the *Falstaff* was eclipsed a mere fortnight later when Sir Charles Mackerras conducted a brilliant revival of Janacek's *Jenufa*, featuring most of the original 1974 cast And early in September the State Opera of South Australia came up with one of its best all-round efforts ever when it staged Nicholas Maw's *One Man Show* in Adelaide — an Australian premiere production to be transferred to the Sydney Opera House for a brief season from October 12

A few Melbourne performances of the national company's *Don Giovanni* featuring Joan Sutherland as Donna Anna and a Sydney revival of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* with Isobel Buchanan as Amelia were also seen during the period under review, as well as a suburban production of Offenbach's ever-popular *La Belle Helene*

Among the women Heather Begg's Mistress Quickly was the highlight to no small extent because of the wealth of comic potential in her peculiar position as go-between in arranging the assignations between Falstaff and the ladies Page and Ford that are so vital to the development of the plot and afford her such a wealth of opportunities to flirt with Falstaff and at the same time send him up quite mercilessly But also as always, Begg sang and acted marvellously

Finally, of course, *Falstaff* is very much the ensemble opera with the exception of the title role The piece is filled with demands onthe meticulousness of those who stage it split-second entrances and exits are necessary if exchanges of dialogue are to make sense and the musical flow is to be maintained Nowhere is this more aptly seen than in the garden scene (Act I Scene 2) which is so beautifully handled in the new AO production that one is scarcely aware of the complexities that have been dealt with

Much of the credit for the ensemble success of this *Falstaff* must of course go to the conductor, Carlo Felice Cillario, for the skilful way he got the whole thing together without at any stage imposing a strait-jacket on the proceedings While paying meticulous attention to the detail of this most marvellous of Verdi scores, he never failed to bring out the light-hearted humour which is the essence of the feeling of the piece And, by the way, elicited a very fine performance of a very difficult score fromthe Elizabethan Sydney Orchestra

ELECTRIFYING JENUFA

The most electrifying evening of the month would simply have to be deemed the opening night of the revival of *Jenufa* under the masterly direction of Sir Charles Mackerras who elicited such an exciting performance the audience was cheering by the end of Act II The only major change from the cast which opened this Copley production in 1974 was the substitution of Elizabeth Fretwell for Elizabeth Connell as the Kostelnicka, and there is no doubt that the dramatic interaction of the central characters was even more taut this year than before Fretwell's lower profile made her less separate from the real world around her made her relationship with Jenufa more credible and so of course her murder of Jenufa's baby more heart-rending and the final reconciliation with Jenufa more meaningful Yet even so, there were times when one could have wished for a good bit more vocal power and dramatic presence than Fretwell could muster

In the title role, Lone Koppel-Winther was a good deal less plagued this year by the vocal wobble that has marred many of her local performances in the past, dramatically, as just about always, she was excellent Both of the tenors were also from the original 1974 cast and both were even better than before Robert Gard as the heartless, drunken Steva, and Ron Stevens as the honest, volatile Laca

Clearly the return of John Copley to

Lone Koppel Winther as the AO's *Jenufa* Photo William Moseley

reproduce this *Jenufa* was an important factor in its success. various details had been rethought for the better More important, though, was the considerably increased depth of dramatic characterisation of the four central characters — not to mention their interplay, a process for which Copley can claim much credit but not all because it is so inextricably linked to the individual maturing processes of the performing artists who have played the same parts in interaction with many of the same performers over a number of years

But the greatest factor contributing to the particular success of this year's *Jenufa* would simply have to be deemed the presence of Sir Charles Mackerras at the helm, for it did not take long for him to demonstrate he absolutely deserves the reputation and medal that have come his way for his work with the music of this particular composer

PREMIERE OF FALSTAFF

It may well be that in five years' time we are rejoicing in exactly the same sort of running-in process as it has affected the new production of Verdi's *Falstaff* premiered at the Opera House on August 1, indeed, it may seem churlish of me to have relegated detailed consideration of it in order to be able to rhapsodise about a mere revival But few productions mature and improve with age so dramatically as the *Jenufa* I have just been talking about, and it is a particular pleasure to be able to report on one that has done just that

This year's *Falstaff*, beautifully designed by Kristian Fredrikson and produced by George Ogilvie for the AO with the aid of Michael Beauchamp as resident producer, lacked only a truly towering realisation of the title role to be wholly memorable right from the word go — the sort of performance it is quite unfair to chide Ronald Maconaghie for not producing simply because it is beyond the parameters of his voice Within those limits he was most impressive, it was a fitting swansong for his long and highly creditable career with the national company, and in particular a great development of his previous reading of this most

Ronald Maconaghie (Falstaff) Gordon Wilcox (Bardolph) and Graeme Ewer (Caius) in the AO's *Falstaff* Photo Branco Gaica

challenging part when the AO last staged *Falstaff* about a decade ago

The limitations, though, were particularly evident when one saw Maconaghie's Falstaff in such close proximity to Robert Allman's Ford and Donald Shank's Pistol, both of which did absolute justice to the demands of the relevant roles

BOCCANEGRA IN BETTER SHAPE

Simon Boccanegra, the other AO Verdi offering this month, was in as good shape as it has ever been in just about every respect, and better in some ways, but the work itself is problematical, and it is difficult to imagine a stage realisation of it that can gloss over successfully all the inbuilt flaws Mario Vanarelli's darkly glittering sets and costumes still look as good as ever, and Michael Beauchamp's rethink of Tito Capobianco's original production incorporates a number of changes for the better but even so the piece leaves one vaguely confused and dissatisfied after an evening in the theatre

Much of the interest in this season' revival focussed on the return of the brilliant young Scottish soprano, Isobel Buchanan, to sing Amelia as well as the fact that *Boccanegra* was to be conducted by Mackerras In the event, Buchanan did not impress as much as I had expected nor did Mackerras' conducting stint, particularly in the wake of the stunning *Jenufa* mentioned above

SUTHERLAND'S DEBUT IN GIOVANNI

In Melbourne, Joan Sutherland had her Australian debut as Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* early in August, with James Morris as the Don and Neil Warren-Smith as Leporello and Richard Bonynge in the pit and most of the rest of the cast the same as has been playing the piece in other cities for the past year I saw the last performance, which was definitely Morris' night in the way his Sydney appearances were last year though there was never at any stage, in the vastness of the Palais Theatre at St Kilda, any question of him overpowering the rest of the performers in the way he was inclined to do in Sydney

Like the rest of the cast Sutherland sang well, but seemed less at home

Joan Sutherland's debut as Donna Anna in the AO's *Don Giovanni*

histrionically with Donna Anna than many other roles she has sung here in recent years. Indeed, the outstanding vocal highlight of the evening for me was Kathleen Moore's beautifully sung Zerlina. Certainly on the strength of this she must be counted very high indeed in the ranks of rising young stars of Australian Opera.

And the giant fabric wings of death which envelop Don Giovanni in the enouement of this particular production were far more effective on the vast stage of the Palais than in any of the other theatres where I have seen them in action before: for once they did not look cramped, and they seemed totally in keeping with the ornate old-fashionedness of the cavernous Palais.

ONE MAN SHOW

Nicholas Maw's *One Man Show*, which was presented in Adelaide by State Opera last month before a brief Sydney season, was a major achievement for the company even if the audience (at least on the night I attended) was noticeably more sparse than the company usually attracts.

The piece, though contemporary — it was first staged in London in 1964, and these are its premiere Australian performances — is by no means aggressively avant garde in musical terms. The idiom is very similar to the Benjamin Britten of, say, *Albert Herring*, which has been aired frequently and widely in this country in recent years. It is the story of a young man who gets himself tattooed at vast expense while drunk and succeeds in getting himself sold to a wealthy female art collector much to his own chagrin and the annoyance of his fiancee.

There is little depth of characterisation but the score is witty and varied to match Arthur Jacobs' often clever libretto, which uses an admittedly very thin plot line as a jumping-off point for something of a send-up of contemporary art criticism and modern values in general. Most of the characters are caricatures, as might be expected in such a work, and this comes through admirably in Anthony Besch's excellent production to designs by John Stoddart, with lighting by the Australian Opera's Anthony Everingham. The conductor is State Opera's musical director, Myer Fredman (who, by the way, also conducted the world premiere season of *One Man Show* at the Jeanettea Cochrane Theatre, London, late in 1964).

Fredman had already demonstrated a particular affinity for the modern English repertory with his excellent work with Michael Tippett's *The Midsummer Marriage* for the 1978 Adelaide Festival of Arts, and is to tackle Britten's *Death In Venice* at next year's festival.

The cast assembled for this year's *One Man Show* is remarkably even, and the production should transfer well to the Sydney Opera House. As Joe Blake, the one man show in person, Roger Howell is quite convincing: he and his fiancee, Audrey Taylor (played in this production by Patsy Hemingway) are the only conventionally normal characters in the piece, and so are in a way much harder to play effectively in the bizarre context of the piece than the other parts which are so much more colorful in themselves.

Roger Howell as Joe Blake in the State Opera of SA's *One Man Show*

Thomas Edmonds and John Wood make a delightful pair of caricatures or art critics, each eccentric in a different way. Keith Hampton is a thoroughly businesslike, unimaginative art dealer in a world largely populated by nuts, and Gerald English marvellous as the director of the British State Gallery, Sir Horace Stringfellow — alternately rhapsodising over a painting by Leonardo da Vinci and standing on his head to do his yoga exercises (an important requirement of anyone who plays the role).

The opera is filled with wit on several levels — musical as well as dramatic. It is a piece that ought to be thoroughly palatable to just about any opera-lover, even many who spurn Britten — for its humour is more down-to-earth and the basic situation depicted scarcely removed at all from ordinary life despite the bizarre goings-on of the arty characters. Joe, Audrey and Maggie Dempster, the wealthy art collector who buys Joe's tattoo in the hope and expectation of possessing Joe's body as well as his skin (beautifully played by Carole McKenzie) are the points of a thoroughly conventional love triangle which is as relevant to everyday life as drama can be.

BELLE HELENE MANGLED

I have space to mention *Belle Helene* presented at Rockdale, Sydney, late in July only very briefly. Its main strengths were a superb conducting stint from John Leeman, who inspired the Rockdale orchestra to the best performance I have ever heard it give, and a very good production from John Faassen. Gaye Macfarlane was a good, but not a brilliant Helen of Troy, and there were a number of excellent supporting performances.

But the version presented was a badly mangled one, including even the gendarmes duet from *Genevieve de Brabant* — inexcusable meddling with the work of one of the finest operetta composers who ever lived.

DANCE

By William Shoubridge

Sydney Dance Company

The newly titled Sydney Dance Company's four week winter engagement at the Opera House was in the nature of both a consolidation of its eminent position and a doorway to the future. The future lies open, precarious but at least planned for in the formation of the Sydney Dance Foundation.

To a packed Gala house on August 9, the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Nelson Meers, paid a panegyric to the Company, its achievements and its adventurous outlook, and announced the Foundation as a means to creating the Sydney Dance Company School, an increasingly necessary feature of the Dance Company if it wants to build strongly on the past and ensure the adequate continuous training in the styles that the SDC and its choreographers will require.

Mention was made of plans for the upcoming overseas tour, the programme for 1980, the large grant for the Bicentennial Celebrations in 1988 and the appointment of Richard Meale as Musical Adviser to the Company. So, exhilaration and expectation was in the air. It is definite that the SDC will be around for a long time and can only grow in stature and appeal.

To get these big plans on the road both the Sydney Gas Light Company and Clutha Developments Pty Ltd especially gave substantial grants to the Company, after which the air then cleared for the 4 week, 3 programme series of performances to take place before an average audience, throughout the duration of 80% capacity.

This was the consolidation of the Company, a cornucopia of 10 works from the beginning of Murphy's tenure (and in the case of Watson's *Random Harvest* even before that). Murphy's new venture into pointe work choreography with *Sheherazade* and the same artist's genial gift to his company, *Signatures*, the title that gave a name to the entire engagement, the *Signature Season*.

Set to Scriabin's *Piano Etudes Opus 42*, the work is a series of caligraphic epigrams ending with a statement of style, a revelation of the SDC dancers (so little mentioned) as the tabula rasa that Murphy employs and enjoys working with. Out of an essential classical recipe he has flavoured the pieces with a tang of "modern" torso movement and the disrupted flows of phrase, impetus, direction, flow and weight that have become, with something of the insouciance and daring of Paul Taylor, perhaps always recognisably "Murphy choreography".

In *Signatures* Murphy has used rather than extended his dancers, revealed wisps of them rather than expose them, and this is enough for the nonce. His own duet with his Muse, Janet Vernon, has the fleet, dragonfly energy that is his own way of dancing, and with Vernon, always a dancer who goes about her work with the concentration of applied engineering, he gets some steely leg and footwork with a piquant sting. It looks occasionally like the *Bluebird* pas de deux, with leaping extensions efface and croise, but he inverts it into the floor as well as upward. Playful and supportive by turns, it is racy and lithe and gets a strong reaction.

The duet for Ross Phillip and Sheree da Costa is more svelte and lyric, and yet more tentative. Whereas the Murphy Vernon duet zapped across the stage, this one twines its way across tracing intricate filaments in the air. The central image is of balance, of give and take, manipulative but with a cool reserve as if this partnership is still finding its way. At the conclusion, Phillip kisses da Costa's hand, a chivalrous touch that manages to be sweet without cloying.

Sheree da Costa is a marvellous acquisition for the Company; she always looks relaxed and at ease with her fellow dancers and that, allied to her sure technique, relaxes the audience. As with Kathy Chard, one does not have to sweat watching them and that is due for thanks. Ross Phillip however is still too stiff and deferential. Although he is dancing better than last year (and that was quite good) I wish *he* would relax and really enjoy moving for its own sake.

Robert Olup loves to strut, which he does in his solo, with one arm literally tied behind his back. His is a confident solo, with a particular movement placed somewhere between a stylised bump and grind and a cossack stamp. It too gets applause for its cheekiness.

The trio for Niel Grigg, Francoise Phillibert and Ramli Ibrahim winds and swivels about like string, a veritable cat's cradle of movement between friends. Leigh Chambers gets a dramatic moment to himself, full of stretches and enquiries and Victoria Taylor and Jennifer Barry go through a slightly competitive duet of jetes against floor rolls, extensions against contractions. But there is a danger in reading too much into the formal patterns evoked.

Are we to assume for example that Susan Barling has a deep and abiding passion for music merely because she makes two lunging, pauseful genuflections to the grand piano? Not necessarily, but cryptic games like this are interesting if one wants to follow them up.

It is enough that *Signatures* is an engrossing work of its genre, it goes as far as it wants to go in the form. The music suits, the designs suit and for Graeme Murphy it is another pace

(Continued over page)

forward in learning to use particular bodies for their particular qualities, without getting tied down

Graham Watson, resident choreographer of the SDC (even before the days of Murphy) was off from performances through an injury on the Tasmania Adelaide tour, but his choreography was represented by the earlier *Random Harvest* and the relatively recent *Regale* and *The Perils of Pauline*

Perils of Pauline strikes me as almost concertedly "naif" Watson has taken some figures from the old movies (Pauline, Tarzan, Marx Brothers etc) and tried to get some mileage out of the romantic dramatic comical permutations of grab-bagging them altogether on one stage Sadly it doesn't work Frank Zappa's music used as background wanders around from one idea to the other, but there is some ubiquitous invention there at least Watson on the other hand has taken stereotypes of the past and turned them into vapid cliches of the present It is a one-joke ballet, perhaps only half a joke, and soon outstays its welcome

There seems to be no defensible *reason* for having these people on stage, or for having them dance and do the things they do The Marx Brothers wander in and out irritatingly, come to that, everybody wanders in and out irritatingly This is probably because what does "happen" in each segment is soon played out so Watson throws in something else in order to stretch the work out to a stageable length If one could see some comment on either personality image or mannerism in these motley characters, one would find a line of thought but *Perils of Pauline* just jitters manically about, without us being any the wiser as to event or cause

Watson's *Random Harvest* is a ballet more enjoyable to talk about The chief disappointment here however is the music, or rather the treatment of the music, Beethoven's *String Quartet in F major opus 135* *Random Harvest* by and large sits with a glaring incongruity on the piece one of the towering masterpieces of Beethoven's last years There is a disconcerting skimming-through reading of the inner passions and momentums of the music I can appreciate Watson's idea of divesting it of the scum of non-musical appendages and academic embalming, but no one can achieve that by supplying new associations, or trivialising it as "background" or attempting to remain independent of it a choreographer can only fight it and he can only be the loser

What does save the choreography, is its flow It is not always placid, is sometimes turbulent and confusing, but it starts definitely and follows its own logic

There is no plot as such, just suggestions, nodules of emotion and flashes of relationships,

The choreographic tone of the work as a whole is low, simple — no spectacular lifts or "impossible" steps, It is lyrical, innocent, down to earth, even down cast at times What does irritate is the non-use of the torso and shoulders, the energy seems to seep up from the floor through the legs and stops short at the waist, the arms hang limply and the shoulders droop

Yet the centre of the work, the adagio, makes something out of this nevertheless As a movement it is built around Kathy Chard, solitary, elegaic and serene Her world is a private world and illustrates Watson's strength as a maker of well crafted solos and duets In his group work though the fabric threatens to fall apart because the argument has been worked out on one or two bodies and the mass patterns are all too frequently repetitions of that sole image

With the rushing finale, we return to more definite territory There are four couples, two of them tied to each other in mutual interdependence the other two troubled, with hapless dashing from one to the other, arms pointed and hands held on twisting turning bodies The two couples occupy different areas of the stage, worlds apart

Random Harvest has its flaws

Graeme Murphy and Janet Murphy in SDC's *Sheherezade* Photo Branco Gaica

choreographically. There are frequent stretches of unploughed land and it is too long. The costumes, replete with some sort of teddy bear head-cap, are unflattering and extraneous. But the work holds the attention for most of its time and Watson has at least tried to match the shifting moods of the music with somewhat diminutive arguments of character, event and encounter.

Graeme Murphy must be congratulated on making something engrossing and different out of Maurice Ravel's voluptuous song cycle *Sheherazade*. The title is usually associated with Fokine's work for the early Ballet Russe set to Rimsky Korsakov's pulsating score. That work however was all melodramatic narrative. Murphy's version to the Ravel plumps for shifting states of mind, just as the scores breathes and sighs about remote, diaphanous oriental fantasies.

But I'm afraid that the easy epithet of "Freudian" tagged by the daily press is going to stick, for better or worse. The piece is too short for building plot or character and Murphy has not entirely brought off those states of mind, difficult enough even for a master choreographer, given the succint language that dance speaks in. What he does achieve in part then is a distillation of aspects of sensuality set in a seraglio of florid silk canopies and huge voyeuristic odalisques.

But it is a terribly cool, chic sensuality and the undulations of Murphy's choreography are sculptured and stone cold, at one with Frederikson's encrusted Klimt-inspired set but at odds with the luminous swirls of the music. This in turn sets up its own tension and diversity of drama, just as Nijinsky's solid terre-a-terre movement in *L'apres midi d'un Faune* set up a dramatic stress against Debussy's score.

Yet, for all that, one has to work and work to get more out of *Sheherazade* than a faint aura of bewitchment. For all its sculptural quality, there is no one movement or series of movements that stand out in the memory, it is all a seamless flow, a frieze come to life. The gestures that do remain are done in moments of pause and solitude. For example, Vernon's body stiffening into a point like a defiant exclamation mark as she stares down those curiously immobile and unused odalisques who turn away in abhorrence like Herodias at Salome's dance. Here is a moment of guilt fighting against abandonment, but it dissolves tantalisingly into another stream of febrile body ties.

The final song of the cycle *L'Indifferent* has other dancers. Sheree da Costa (replaced excellently later on by Francoise Phillibert) and Ross Philip, sliding down from their silken trapezes and joining in with Vernon and Murphy. What follows is a tightly folded quartet of shifting desire, man woman, woman woman, man man. They slide across the floor and clasp themselves into indiscernible bundles, not so much as lovers longing for a caress but as enemies searching for a toehold.

In that, is an encapsulation somewhere.

As the curtain falls and the score fades into silence, all four separately and neurotically stalk the stage, like unsatiated lions padding about a dank arena in search of fresh victims. The custom and postures of loveless erotica are all that's left.

It is, in the end insubstantial, but a fragrance does linger and there are many things worthy of close attention in it. One is the much more able handling of plastique, that art of transmitting one movement to another, another is the inventive use of pointe shoes without falling into the mannerisms of the form. All the dancers in this little ouvrage-de-negligee serve Murphy's purpose well. They flow like milk at times or stiffen up into nervy icons as the choreography dictates.

All in all this *Sheherazade* looks a little like a Lifar ballet of the 40's, nice perhaps for the dog days of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, but hardly worthy of the outward going Sydney Dance Company of today.

Perhaps a piece along the same lines but with a more exposed musical line could be tried at a later date. Ravel's *Chansons Madecasses* is a suggestion, but I do think that Murphy could do a lot worse than make two pure-line ballets to Mozart music before venturing out into such exotic convolutions again.

Programme 3 will be reviewed next month.

Neil Grigg, Francoise Philibert, and Ramli Ibrahim in SDC's *Signatures*. *Photo: Branco Gaica*

KAL and giving dance a good name

By Terry Owen

"*KAL* is an imaginary town existing only in the dreams of its creators Any resemblance to a Western Australian goldrush town of the 1890s is purely coincidental, except insofar as inhabitants of *KAL* share the rigours, the challenges and the pioneering spirit of their predecessors of 100 years ago"

That's how the Western Australian Ballet Company programme describes the setting for *KAL*, the three-act work commissioned by the Company and recently presented in a Perth Concert Hall season as part of the State's 150th anniversary celebrations.

That description captures the simple, even simplistic tone of the Elizabeth Backhouse story on which the ballet is based Young lovers trying to make a future for themselves in the bush, dance hall floozies with hearts of gold, wheeler-dealer gamblers who get their come-uppance - they are all there, just as, very likely, they were in 1893 when Paddy Hannan and his mates struck it rich near Kalgoorlie

Choreographer and producer Garth Welch has skillfully brought this story to theatrical life by matching the varying skills of his dancers to the demands of the scenario He was helped enormously by the lively and attractive music composed by Verdon Williams Mr Williams has a long and successful connection with dance as composer and conductor, and his score for *KAL* is ample evidence of his craftsmanship and musical energies

Graham Maclean's costumes and settings played up the period details without passing over into burlesque, he's probably come as close as any other designer to winning the apparently unwinnable battle to turn the Perth Concert Hall into a functioning theatrical setting

The Company was enlarged to encompass the storyline, and one of Mr Welch's strengths as producer was his ability to get consistently well projected performances out of relatively inexperienced performers

WA Ballet's *KAL* at the Perth Concert Hall Photo Bill Angove

WA Ballet rehearsing Garth Welch's *KAL* Photo Jo Giordano

Company regulars like Vanessa McIntosh, Michele Ryan Anthony Shearsmith and John Salisbury clearly relished the opportunity of performing in a work that's as much musical theatre as it is dance

Commissioning a ballet to celebrate the State's history is one thing making it happen well is another *KAL* isn't without its occasional flaws and choreographic lapses Next year the Company will hopefully have access to His Majesty's, Perth's classic proscenium theatre presently being rebuilt by the Government for use by local and visiting performing arts groups A restaging of *KAL* in that theatre would give Mr Welch a chance to rework those dodgy bits The important fact about *KAL* is that the choreographer aimed at creating an entertainment to attract and please the family audiences who haven't exactly thronged to recent seasons, and in this he succeeded handsomely

Garth Welch's appointment has been only recent to the position of Artistic Director He replaces Robin Haig, who has been on leave of absence since the birth of her second daughter in January this year

It's an important appointment for the Company as the State's only professional dance group faces a period of responsibility and challenge Access next year to a central city theatre suited to dance must mean a review of the existing repertoire At the very least it will mean, I hope, a chance for Perth audiences to see some recent works restaged in an appropriate setting

Robin Haig revived the Company two years ago and brought to the job of artistic director a wealth of overseas experience and access to choreographers like Leigh Warren and Jacqui Carroll, and with the innovative Sunday Club she made a beginning on the difficult job of building a faithful audience for dance

The Company is lucky to have, as Miss Haig's successor, such an illustrious man of the theatre as Garth Welch He and Sylvia Box, the new administrator, have built up a good working relationship over the six months Mr Welch has been Associate Director They both seem very conscious of the need to identify and explore ways of making dance feature in Western Australia's diary of entertainments They are working with a good looking company, with fine technicians among the women And with goodies to offer like the very attractive Barry Moreland piece currently in rehearsal, the Company has the sort of repertoire that gives dance a good name

FILM

Career not so brilliant

By Elizabeth Riddell

It's possible that Margaret Fink, the producer of *My Brilliant Career*, expected too much of the Miles Franklin novel on which the film is based, mistaking its girlish heroics for a real statement about turn-of-the-century frustrations for women indeed for everybody in Australian country life There is not much action in the original novel, and a film which relies more on emotion and attitudes and less on action presents a lot of problems for director and performers If it is also set in the historic past, it runs the risk of emerging as a period piece unless relevance to the present can be established

My Brilliant Career actually does not have much to say, certainly not as much as does *The Getting of Wisdom*, with which it will inevitably be compared This may be because Henry Handel Richardson was a much tougher creative artist and more firmly seated in her art, than was Miles Franklin In a chapter headed 'Australian Fiction to 1920" contributed by John Barnes to Geoffrey Dutton's *The Literature of Australia*, he quotes Miles Franklin as saying, "There is no plot in this story because there has been none in my life it is simply a yarn, a real yarn, not a romance" He adds, "She slipped into the well-worn romance pattern, with a dashing hero on the horizon *My Brilliant Career* expresses a gifted young girl, frustrated by the poverty and conventional outlook of her family It wavers between girlish day-dreams and lively comment on the everyday"

The Getting of Wisdom in which Laura is a clearly defined personality, was written ten years after *My Brilliant Career* There is nothing fuzzy about Laura, as there is about Sybylla Laura has the killer instinct as her creator did and it makes her a more interesting subject for a film

Judy Davis, Robert Grubb Aileen Britton and Sam Neill in *My Brilliant Career*
Photo David Kynoch

Given all that *My Brilliant Career* presents an actress of star quality, Judy Davis, who gets everything she can out of Sybylla

The film begins with Sybylla's determination to be somebody, to somehow escape the family feckless father, weak flustered mother, sympathetic but uncomprehending sisters and brothers with whom she is stuck in rural poverty The family is not the equivalent of a peasant family, it is just hopeless. Sybylla irritates her parents and is bundled off to her grandmother's pastoral property to the company of an aunt and occasional uncle, induced into the rituals of complexion creams and pretty dresses and a silly English jackeroo

On the neighbouring property the "squire", Harry Beecham and his Aunt Gussie entertain Sybylla She falls hoydenishly in love she and Harry stage pillow fights and jealous scenes She is all too predictably outshone at the woolshed ball by a belle with money The squire is broke and the belle would be a useful answer to his bank manager Still he loves Sybylla and she almost loves him, especially as she has been banished from her mother's family and has had to work as a mother's help in a bog-Irish family It all adds up to nothing much, petering out as the novel did

Apart from Judy Davis' endearing performance there is a very satisfactory appearance by Patricia Kennedy as Aunt Gussie, chatelaine of a handsome country mansion (in real life, Camden Park House at Menangle, NSW) and another from Peter Whitford as bubbly Uncle Julius Harry Beecham is played by Sam Neill, a New Zealand actor whose good looks do not compensate for a singular lack of ability to convey any but the most shallow emotions Aileen Britton, as Sybylla's well-intentioned, insensitive grandmother, performs deftly and Wendy Hughes, an abandoned wife and docile daughter, is appropriately wistful

My Brilliant Career has marvellous landscapes, is designed with care and imagination, is occasionally over-dressed an excess of satin negligees and will certainly be remembered as being the first feature length film directed by Gillian Armstrong and the one in which Judy Davis qualified as a rising star

BOOKS

By John McCallum

TA/Currency New Writers and Playlab Plays

Departmental by Meryvyn Rutherford. Theatre Australia New Writing. Currency Press. Rrp $2.75.
A Manual of Trench Warfare by Glem Gorman. Theatre Australia New Writing. Currency Press. Rrp $2.75.
Not Even A Mouse by Barbara Stellmach. Playlab Press.
Three Queensland One Act Plays For Festivals. Playlab Press.

If one of the criteria for cultural success is the existence of an establishment, a settled order of things, then Australian drama can be said to have "arrived". In the early part of this decade it was possible to hope that the straightforward, old-fashioned naturalism of Australian playwrighting would prove to be growing pains, but increasingly it is getting obvious that this is really our way of doing it.

Fortunately, but perhaps unfortunately in the model he sets, we have an author of integrity and genius in David Williamson, who writes in this mode.

It is a bit awkward reviewing the new plays from Currency here, for they are published in conjunction with the magazine and are in fact called "*Theatre Australia* New Writing". Subscribers will get them anyway. As a second string to Currency's bow one might expect them to be adventurous, experimental or unusual plays, not suitable for the main list of established plays, but reveal the new eclecticism and stylistic promiscuity in Australian writing. Such is not the case, and probably because such a thing does not exist.

There are, nevertheless, other Australian styles of writing than the easily publishable, easily readable observations of Australian life. The rough, comic vaudevillian tradition is difficult to publish because so much depends on music and visuals, but it is still a pity that well-known plays such as *Flash Jim Vaux* and *Hamlet On Ice* remain unpublished, while many obscurer and less interesting naturalistic works get into print. For these sorts of plays publication

perhaps means a production logbook with photos, scores and the works, rather than a simple literary script, a lot to ask of a struggling publisher trying to encourage new writers.

The first thing that is striking reading *Department* and *A Manual of Trench Warfare* together, is that there is not a single female part in either of them. They are both studies of artificial closed male communities which since the convicts, shearers, *Riots Bugles* and what have you, may be a great Australian theme but is getting very familiar. There is an apartheid developing in Australian theatre as clusters of writers, directors and actors band together according to sex.

Departmental is a detective thriller without a real ending (an increasingly popular genre among writers) concerning a police departmental enquiry into a theft. The guy who was so obviously guilty that you knew he couldn't have done it, turns out to have done it, and the unexplained character you thought had done it remains unexplained. It is a very straightforward play. Multiple set, 4m.

A Manual of Trench Warfare is set in a trench at Gallipoli and shows the confrontation between a wholesome Australian country lad and a rather serious-minded Irishman overly conscious of his Celtic ancestry. They try to find beauty in the hell of the battlefield. The play is included with this issue of the magazine.

Two new volumes from Queensland's Playlab Press are *Not Even A Mouse* by Barbara Stellmach and *Three Queensland One Act Plays* for Festivals. Playlab is the only publisher in Australia catering predominantly for the amateur group market, and deserves wide attention. They are doing a great deal to encourage Queensland writers.

Not Even A Mouse is a genre detective mystery, set in a resort in the mountains of New Zealand. It has all the cliches of the English model — a stately old house surrounded in this case by geysers and boiling mud pits, double murders, a handkerchief left at the scene of the crime, and a heroine with a murky Past. After the initial unlikely problem is set, the action develops well enough and the ending is a surprise. An additional one-line clue placed early on would eliminate the slight sense of cheating about not revealing the villain's past until the last scene. One set. 4f 3m.

The other volume contains Ian Austin's *Two Men in Buckram*, Jacqueline McKimmie's *The Kiss* and Helen Haenke's *Firebug*. *The Kiss* is by far the most interesting and hopefully will not have its stage life restricted to amateur theatricals. It starts laboriously, but soon develops into a funny and scary look at mother-daughter relationships and the daughter's experiences. There are 3 very good parts for women. *Firebug* is a neat and chilling if rather contrived encounter between a man who goes round lighting bush fires and a very strange girl who wants to

GUIDE

ACT

THEATRE

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)
Soir de Gale (Variety) 2 and 3 October
Clown Peter Gray, mime artist 6 October
CANBERRA THEATRE FOYER (49 7600)
Fortune Theatre Lunchtime Series
The Boat by Jill Shearer; Director, John Paisley Closes 5 October
After Magritta by Tom Stoppard Director Desmond Bishop 8 to 19 October
LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS
Mike Jackson traditional bush music for pre-schools, infants, primary and secondary schools 1-7 October
MANIKA THEATRE RESTAURANT (95 2328)
Diamond Maggie's Wild West Show Director Russell Jarrett Closes 3 October
PLAYHOUSE (49 6488)
Nimrod
Travelling North by David Williamson Director John Bell 4 to 27 October
REID HOUSE THEATRE WORKSHOP (47 0781)
The Jigsaw Company
Nono's Nose, The Empty House, Stereo Schools in the ACT
THEATRE 3 (47 4222)
Canberra Repertory
French Without Tears by Terence Rattigan, Director, Pam Rosenberg 3 to 27 October, Wednesday to Saturday.

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)
The Australian Opera
La Traviata 25, 29, 31 October
Patience 26, 27, 30 October

CONCERTS

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 7600)
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows Clifford Hocking Enterprises 1 November

For entries, please contact Marguerite Wells on 43 3063

NSW

THEATRE

ACTORS COMPANY (660 2503)
Programme unconfirmed contact theatre for details
ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357 6611)
School Tours *Alex Hood* folksinger metropolitan area throughout October
Blinky Bill a children's play for infants and primary, Hunter and North West throughout October
Dance Concert Ltd folk dances for infants, primary and secondary, Central West until 26 October
The Bandels world of magic for infants and primary; Riverina until 26 October
Sontegara a renaissance musical ensemble for infants primary and secondary, North Coast and Hunter until 20 October
The Polyglot Puppets, metropolitan area throughout October
In My Country with Leonard Teale Central West until 13 October
Adult Tours *Bunratti Castle*, written, directed and starring Brendan Locke, throughout October
COURT HOUSE HOTEL (969 8202)
Oxford Street Taylor Square
Bungle in the Jungle by Rick Maier and Malcolm Frawley, director Malcolm Frawley; music, Sandra Ridgewell with Steven Sacks, Susan Asquith and Chris Galletti Throughout October
ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)
Programme unconfirmed contact theatre for details
FRANK STRAIN'S BULL N'BUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)
Thanks for the Memory a musical review from the turn of the century to today, with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Lorain director, George Carden Throughout October
GENESIAN THEATRE (55 5641)
The Hollow by Agatha Christie, director Dennis Allen with Gaynor Mitchell, Patricia East, Anthony Hayes and Paul Sarks Until 27 October
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)
Annie the musical director, George Martin with Hayes Gordon, Jill Perryman, Nancye Hayes Ric Hutton, Anne Grigg and Kevin Johns Throughout October
HUNTER VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY (26 2526)
Flesvitine by Roger Hall director, Terence Clarke Until 14 October
Treats by Christopher Hampton, director, Peter Barclay From 26 October
KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (92 1415)
Kirribilli Hotel Milsons Point
The Western Show by P P Cranney, director Richmond Young music, Adrian Morgan with Patrick Wood Margie McCrae Jane Hamilton Paul Chubb and Ros Hohnen Throughout October
LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (358 5676)
Modern Mime Theatre, programme of illusionary mime devised by Michael Freeland for infants primary and secondary, in metropolitan area throughout October
Mike Jackson, traditional bush music for pre-schools infants, primary and secondary schools, metropolitan area from 8-19 October and Hunter and North West from 22 October
MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)
The Druid's Nest by Emlyn Williams,

director, Alastair Duncan with Maggie Kirkpatrick, Raymond du Parc, Ellen Freeman, Gordon McDougall, Alan Tohin, Philip Hinton, Hugh Munro and Charlie Strachan. Until 20 October

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (692 0555)
Seymour Centre, Everest Theatre
The Mysterious Potamus by Lifschitz and Kichanova, adapted and directed by Richard Bradshaw. 9-12 October

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (909 8222)
Lost to the Devil written and directed by Stanley Walsh, with Alexander Hay, Terry Peck, John Hannan and Linda Cropper. Throughout October

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (977 6585)
Ron Amok, a new revue by John McKellar and Ron Frazer, director Bill Orr, with Ron Frazer. Throughout October

NEW THEATRE (519 3403)
Rusti Bugles by Sumner Locke Elliott, director, John Tasker, with Richard Smith, Rob Thomas, Alex Pollack, David Kerslake, Toby Prentice and Bill Hopes. Into October

Juno and the Paycock by Sean O'Casey. Commences in October

NIMROD THEATRE (699 5003)
Upstairs: *Betrayal* by Harold Pinter, director, John Sumner for the Melbourne Theatre Company, with Neil Fitzpatrick, Edward Hepple, John Stanton and Elizabeth Alexander. Commences 9 October

Downstairs: *Penphar's Wife* by Margo Hilton and *Not I* by Samuel Beckett, director, Ken Horler. Commences 7-17 October

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (357 1200)
School tours throughout metropolitan area. *My Home is Your Garbage Bin* for primary schools and *Actions Speak Louder Than Words* for secondary schools, both directed by Ian Watson, with Nola Colelax, Margaret Davis, David London, Colin Allen and Bryan Jones

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (30 7211)
Bondi Pavilion Theatre
Programme unconfirmed - contact theatre for details.

269 PLAYHOUSE (929 6804)
Back to Belong along along a children's musical by Rome Warren, with 680 Players, director John Howitt. Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 13 October

PUB THEATRE
Dee Why Hotel (98 8445) &
Hotel Manly (977 5599)
The Jungle Show, directed by Don Swonnell, with Michael Ross, Sonja Tallis, Christine Woodland, Terry Byrnes and Anthony Martin. Mondays at the Dee Why Hotel and Wednesdays at the Hotel Manly

Q THEATRE (047 21 5735)
Sweeney Todd by Dibdin Pitt adapted by Max Iffland, director Kevin Jackson with Ron Hackett, Alan Brel, Peter Kingston, Gae Anderson and Bill Conn. At Bankstown Town Hall from 5 October

RIVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (069 25 2052)
One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest by Dale Wasserman. From 12 October

THE ROCKS PLAYERS (358 6780, 328 7638)
The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui by Bertolt Brecht, director Anthony Barclay in repertoire with *Tuhi* an adaptation of Wedekind's *Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*, director, Allan Kingsford Smith. In repertory until 13 October

SEYMOUR CENTRE (692 0555)
Soviet Cultural Festival. 8-21 October

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (588 3948)
Free drama workshops on Sats and Suns (10-5) including play building, mime, dance, sculpture, puppetry, design, radio and video

SPEAKEASY THEATRE RESTAURANT (662 7442)
Roots III, director Jim Fishburn, with Kate Fitzpatrick, Michael Aitkens and Donald McDonald. Throughout October

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (699 9322)
Drama Theatre, Sydney Opera House
Long Day's Journey into Night by Eugene O'Neill, director, Robert Lewis, with Patricia Connolly, Kevin Miles, Shauna O'Grady, Max Phipps and David Webb until 20 October

The Venetian Twins by Carlo Goldoni, director, John Bell with Drew Forsythe, Tony Sheldon, Jennifer McGregor and John McTernan. From 26 October

THEATRE ROYAL (231 6111)
Gin Game by D L Coburn, director, Peter Williams, with Ruth Cracknell and Ron Haddrick. Until 27 October

The Day After the Fair by Frank Harvey, director, Frith Banbury, with Deborah Kerr, Andrew McFarlane, Patricia Kennedy, Gordon Glenwright, Diane Smith and Lynette Curran. Commences 31 October

DANCE

LIMBS DANCE COMPANY (357 6228)
Cell Block Theatre, Darlinghurst
New Zealand contemporary dance theatre 19 to 23 October

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY (358 4600)
Lunchtime contemporary dance presentation 22-26 October

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (2 0588)
Opera Theatre, S O H
Patience by Gilbert and Sullivan, conductor Geoffrey Arnold, producer, John Cox. *La Traviata* by Verdi, conductor Peter Robinson, producer John Copley. In repertory until 20 October

Regent Theatre (61 6967)
Madame Butterfly by Puccini, conductor, Peter Robinson with Renata Scotto. 6, 9 and 12 October

STATE OPERA OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA (2 0588)
One Man Show by Nicholas Maw. 12-17 October

CONCERTS

HORDERN PAVILION (33 3769)
Santana, Paul Dainty Corporation. 8 October

NEWCASTLE CIVIC THEATRE (2 1977)
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows, Clifford Hocking Enterprises. 24 October

OPERA HOUSE (2 0588)
Sammy Davis Junior, Pat Condon Promotions. 23, 25, 26 October

REGENT THEATRE (61 6967)
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows, Clifford Hocking Enterprises. 20 October

Red Army Choir song and dance ensemble. October 22

For entries contact Carole Long on 357 1200

QLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)
Catherine by Jill Shearer. Director, Jennifer Radbourne. To 6 October

Winter Journey by Clifford Odets, Director, Jason Savage. 11 October to 10 November

BRISBANE ACTORS COMPANY
Twelfth Night Theatre (52 7622)
On Approval by Frederick Lonsdale, Director, Bruce Parr. Designer, David Clendinning, with Kaye Stevenson and Alan Endicott. To 13 October

DDIAE, Toowoomba (30 1300)
Arts Theatre Company - *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare, Directore, David Addenbrooke. 15 to 27 October

QUEENSLAND ART COUNCIL (221 5900)
Rialto Theatre. Philippe Genty Puppet

Company from Paris To 2 October
QUEENSLAND THEATRE COMPANY (221 5177)
A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare Director, Alan Edwards Designer, Peter Cooke Open air performances in Albert Park with the Queensland Opera Company Queensland Theatre Orchestra Queensland Ballet Company and Australian Youth Ballet To 6 October
POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE
For programme ring 36 1745
T N COMPANY (52 7622)
La Boite Theatre
Going Bananas by Richard Bradshaw John Summons and Mil Perrin Director, John Milson Designer Mike Bridges To 13 October
Christie in Love by Howard Brenton Director Jane Atkins, Designer, Mike Bridges
LA BOITE (36 1622)
They Shoot Horses, Don't They? Director, David Bell Designer, Mike Bridges Opens 24 October

DANCE

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (229 3355)
On tour at Sydney Opera House *Ballet 79*

OPERA

HER MAJESTYS (221 2777)
Queensland Light Opera Company
White Horses Inn Director, David Macfarlane Designer, Max Hurley 4 to 20 October
Queensland Opera Company
Don Giovanni by Mozart Producer John Thompson Conductor, Graeme Young Designer Allan Lees 27 Octoher, 7, 9, 10 November

CONCERTS

FESTIVAL HALL (229 4442)
Santana Paul Dainty Corporation 7 October
MAYNE HALL
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows Clifford Hocking Enterprises 22 October

For entries contact Don Batchelor on 269 3018

SA

THEATRE

LA MAMA (46 4212)
Crawford Lane Hindmarsh
The One Day of the Year by Alan Seymour, Director Max Wearing 1-6 October
The Crucible by Arthur Miller, Director Bruno Knez 15-20 October
Q THEATRE (21 5735)
89 Halifax Street
Darling I'm Home by Jack Popplewell Director Bill O Day 15 September - 13 October Wed-Sat
SA CREATIVE WORKSHOP (272 3036)
Workshop productions of *Billi Liar* and *The Dumb Waiter* Touring schools
THE SPACE
Festival Centre (51 0121)
The Bastard from the Bush, a Henry Lawson anthology with Robin Ramsay Director, Rodney Fisher 12-27 October
STATE THEATRE COMPANY (51 5151)
The Playhouse
Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare, Director, Nick Enright 14 September-6 October
TROUPE
At Theatre 62 Burbidge Road Hilton
Caspar by Peter Handke Director, Keith Gallasch 12-29 October Wed-Sun

DANCE

AUSTRALIAN DANCE THEATRE (212 2084)
On tour 2-3 October Manila, 10-13 Hobart, 18-20 Launceston, 25-27 Burnie

OPERA

THE STATE OPERA (51 6161)
Opera Theatre
Werther by Massenet Musical director Myer Fredman director, Anthony Besch, designer John Stoddart 29-31 October 2 3 5 7 9, 10 November

CONCERTS

APOLLO STADIUM (43 6091)
Santana Paul Dainty Corporation 1 October
FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows Clifford Hocking Enterprises 27 Octoher
For entries contact Edwin Relf on 223 8610

TAS

THEATRE

POLYGON THEATRE (34 8018)
Northern Season production at Devonport High School
She Stoops to Conquer by Sheridan 5 6 October

DANCE

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)
Australian Dance Theatre 10-13 October
TASMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23 7996)
Kidstuff tour of SA

For entries please contact editorial office on (049) 67 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ACTORS THEATRE (429 1630)
New Adventures of Paddington Bear (Saturdays)
ARENA THEATRE (24 9667 or 24 1937)
Musicians of Bremen by Ernie Gray Companies One and Two touring to lower primary schools
Hercules and the Golden Apples by Ernie Gray Companies One and Two, touring to upper primary schools
SCAT - Suitcase Activity Theatre One actor-teacher drama experience
Arena Theatre Community Activities
Youth theatre group 7 30-10 00pm Mondays
Women's theatre group 7 30-10 00pm Tuesdays
Saturday morning class
9 00-10 30 6-10 year olds
11 00-1 00 11-15 year olds
ARTS COUNCIL OF VICTORIA (529 4355)
Touring
Flexiune by Roger Hall Director, Don Mackay, featuring Paul Karo, Terry McDermott, Anne Phelon Sydney Conabere John Murphy Wayne Bill, Chris Connelly Also tour of the Petra String Quartet and the Phillipe Genty Puppet Co
AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (PRAM FACTORY) (347 7133)

Give the Shadow a Run, a season of three Phil Motherwell plays From 18 October
COMEDY THEATRE (663 4993)
The Day After the Fair by Frank Harvey Director, Frith Banbury designer, Kristian Fredrikson Starring Deborah Kerr, Andrew McFarlane, Patricia Kennedy, Lynette Curran, Diane Smith, Gordon Glenwright Presented by the Paul Dainty Corporation
CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE (870 6742)
Community-based theatre working in schools, libraries and community centres TIE team
It's only a bit of green glass! by Jan Jason Gunzburg Touring to primary schools, libraries and community centres throughout Victoria
Term III Continuation of *Who What When and Where* remedial creative drama programme
FLYING TRAPEZE CAFE (41 3727)
Trapeze Tabloids with Bob Thornycroft, Nancy Iang, and Nicholas Flannigan To 13 October
GAY NINETIES MUSIC HALL GEELONG
Kieth Reece and Co Fri and Sat only
HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (63 7643)
Playbox Theatre
The Ripper Show by Frank Hatherley, Director Graeme Blundell, designer peter Corrigan From 12 October
Upstairs
The Spalding Family Album by Colin Ryan
HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (663 3211)
The Two Ronnies To 6 October
Australian Ballet School graduation performances
LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6226)
The Circus Show Circus Oz presents the Great Cure-All Tues-Sat
LA MAMA (350 4593 347 6085)
The Grass is Greener by Bernie Mathews and *She'll Be Right* by Tony Ralph two prison plays; Director Tony Ralph with Stan Taylor and Co 4-21 October
Ground Rules and *Clean Sweep* by Led Radic, Director Malcolm Robertson To 11 November
MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 4000)
Season 26 Part 2
Russell St Theatre
Marsupials by Barry Oakley, Director Bruce Myles, with Max Gillies and Carol Burns
Athenaeum Theatre
The Alchemist by Ben Jonson, Director Frank Hauser; designer James Ridewood, featuring Vivien Davies, Sandy Gore, Simon Chilvers, Warwick Comber, Gary Day, David Downer, Robert Essex, Jonathan Hardy Bruce Kerr, Roger Oakley Frederick Parslow and Ian Suddards To 27 October
Travelling North by David Williamson, (World premiere) Nimrod Theatre production Director John Bell designer Ian Robinson Starring Frank Wilson and Carol Raye
Athenaeum 2
In Dirt Bound by Ron Elisha Director Judith Alexander To 27 October
Tributary Productions directed by Judith Alexander productions of new or unconventional Australian or overseas plays
Youth Work classes directed by Stephanie Maguire
Also School Theatre Project and Curtain Up - country bus-to-theatre program
OLD MILL GEELONG (052 21 1444)
Drama Centre of Deakin University Regular evening productions
PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE (818 6650)
The Circus Strings N Things Director, Burt Cooper designer Leslie Binns 10 00am Mon-Fri and 1 00pm 2 00pm Sat
POLYGLOT PUPPETS (818 1512)
Multi-cultural puppet theatre with Mogg the Cat and Friends Touring schools and community centres
PRINCESS THEATRE (662 2911)
Danni La Rue
TIKKI AND JOHN'S THEATRE LOUNGE (663 1754)
With Tikki and John Newman Myrtle Roberts, Vic Gordon and guest artists
MAJOR AMATEUR COMPANIES
(please contact these theatres in the evening for further details)

BASIN THEATRE GROUP	762 1082
CLAYTON THEATRE GROUP	878 1702
HEIDELBERG REP	49 2262
MALVERN THEATRE CO	211 0020
PUMPKIN THEATRE	42 8237
WILLIAMSTOWN LITTLE THEATRE	528 4267
1812 THEATRE	796 8624

DANCE

PALAIS THEATRE (534 0657)
Daytime production *Peter and the Wolf* Presented by Arts Management Tasmanian Ballet Company

OPERA

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543 2828)
Iolanthe by Gilbert and Sullivan Babirra Players 3 4 5 6 October
Gipsy Cheltenham Light Opera Co 18-27 October
VICTORIAN STATE OPERA (41 5061)
Grant Street Theatre
Contemporary Music Theatre Liason *Juney Boves* by Louis Nowra adapted for opera by Brian Howard Conductor Richard Dirall, director Peter Jordan designer, Steve Nolan with Lyndon Terracini John Fulford Pauline Ashleigh, Barbara Sawbell 2 3 4 5 October

CONCERTS

DALLAS BROOKS HALL (419 2288)
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows Clifford Hocking Enterprises 17 October
FESTIVAL HALL (63 5654)
Santana Paul Dainty Corporation 3 Oct
Sammy Davis Junior Pat Condon Promotions 30 31 October

For entries contact Les Cartwright on 781 1777

WA

THEATRE

HOLE IN THE WALL (381 3500)
Summit Conference by Robert David McDonald Director, Colin McColl 12 October - 10 November
NATIONAL THEATRE COMPANY (325 3500)
The Playhouse
No Man's Land by Harold Pinter Director Stephen Barry 2-20 October
Little Foxes by Lillian Hellman Director Edgar Metcalf 25 October - 17 November
REGAL THEATRE (381 2403)
Tonight - Lola Blau Director Ted Robinson, starring Robyn Archer 10-27 October
WA ARTS COUNCIL TOURING PROGRAMME
As We Are with Beverly Dunn South West and Goldfields

DANCE

WA BALLET COMPANY
Country tour 24 September - 6 October The Company will then appear in *Ballet '79* in Sydney at the end of October

CONCERTS

CONCERT HALL
Blossom Dearie and Don Burrows Clifford Hocking Enterprises 28 October

For entries contact Joan Ambrose on 299 6639